NATION

Drugs worth ₹111 cr seized in TN village

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BUSINESS

Sensex falls 617 pts, Nifty below 22,350

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SPORTS

Job is far from done for Mumbai against Vidarbha, says Shams Mulani

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 12 MARCH 2024 | TUESDAY | BENGALURU | 1 RAMADAN, 1445 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 55 | Pages: 8

Ramadan is the month of purity, celebration anddivinity. Salar News wishes its readers a joyful Ramadan

Sehri: 5.19 am | Iftar: 6.30 pm

Ramadan moon sighted, Muslims to begin fasting today

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Ramadan moon has been sighted in various parts of the country and Muslims will begin fasting in India on Tuesday, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind said. Fatehpuri Masjid Imam Mufti Mukarram Ahmad also told PTI that the moon had been sighted and fasts would begin on Tuesday. He greeted people on the occasion and said the moon was clearly sighted by many people from the mosque and in many parts of the country. Millions of Muslims all over the world eagerly await the sight of the crescent moon, marking the beginning of the holy month. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to dusk after the pre-dawn meal 'sehri' and break their fast at sunset with 'iftar'. The end of the month is marked by Eid.
—PTI

Tata IPL 2024 is set to start from 24 March. The league will see tough competition between 10 teams. Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) hopes to bounce back after finishing at the bottom of the points table in 2023. Salar News takes a look at SRH's key players, strengths and weaknesses.
>>>More on Page 8

UK bans foreign health workers from bringing families

LONDON, 11 MARCH

Overseas care workers, including Indians, will be restricted from bringing dependant family members with them to the UK under new visa rules that come into force from this week. The UK Home Office had announced the plans earlier and on Monday said the new rules follow a "disproportionate" 120,000 dependants accompanying 100,000 workers on the care visa route last year. It is claimed the move will radically cut net migration to the UK and tackle visa abuse to bring down "unsustainable" levels of legal migration.
—PTI

K'taka bans colours in gobi manchurian, cotton candy

BENGALURU, 11 MARCH

State government has banned using Rhodamine-B, a toxic textile dye, used in popular food items like gobi manchurian and cotton candy due to its harmful cancer-causing effects.

Announcing the ban on Monday, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao raised concerns about artificial food colouring agents such as Tartrazine, Sunset Yellow and Carmoisine, which are widely used in gobi manchurian and cotton candy.

"Food safety is a top priority for the State government, and drives will be conducted to find food items containing harmful colouring agents. The government aims to raise awareness among consumers about the ingredients used in food products and we expect restaurant owners to maintain hygiene standards," he said. Apart from cancelling the licence, a penalty of Rs 10 lakh and imprisonment of up to seven years will be imposed on establishments violating the ban.

While the ban prohibits the use of Rhodamine-B in gobi manchurian and cotton candy, white cotton candy can still be sold in the State and gobi manchurian can be prepared without using artificial colouring agents.

"We cannot ban the source of artificial food colouring as it is used for different purposes in creating medicine, textile dye and in packed food as per guidelines. But, using the food colouring without any licence is illegal and harmful to public health," Rao said. The government plans to introduce a helpline to enable people to report instances of artificial colouring.

During an investigation, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India collected 171 samples of gobi manchurian, out of which 107 samples were found unsafe.
—Salar News

Over 107 of 171 samples of gobi manchurian were found unsafe *PHOTO: PTI*

4 yrs after protests, CAA comes into force

Centre notifies rules for CAA just ahead of LS polls

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Centre on Monday implemented the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, a move that comes four years after the law was passed. This paves the way for citizenship to undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

The rules were notified days ahead of the expected announcement of the Lok Sabha elections. With this, the Modi government will now start granting Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants -- Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians -- from the three countries.

Moments after the Centre announced the implementation of CAA, the government's e-gazette website experienced a sudden crash.

"The applications will be submitted in a completely online mode for which a web portal has been provided," a Home Ministry spokesperson said.

CAA was passed in December 2019 and subsequently got the President's assent but there were protests in several parts of the country against it, with many Opposition parties speaking out against the law calling it "discriminatory". The law could not come into effect as rules had not been notified till now.

Congress and other Opposition parties slammed the government's step, alleging it is designed to polarise the coming Lok Sabha elections, especially in West Bengal and Assam.

According to the Manual on Parliamentary Work, the rules for any legislation should be framed within six months of presidential assent or the government has to seek an extension from the Committees on Subordinate Legislation in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

Since 2020, Home Ministry has been taking extensions at regular intervals from the parliamentary committee for framing the rules.

No document will be sought from the applicants, an official said.

Over 100 people lost their lives during the anti-CAA protests or police action. On Monday, security was stepped up in Shaheen Bagh, Jamia and other areas of the national capital as well as in various states where anti-CAA protests were held in the past.
—PTI
>>>More on Page 3

Since 2020, Centre has been taking extensions at regular intervals from parliamentary panel for framing the rules *PHOTO: PTI*

'Govt notifying rules politically motivated'

Bengaluru, 11 Mar

Centre notifying the rules for Citizenship (Amendment) Act is "politically motivated", keeping the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in mind, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday said. He said this move shows the BJP's lack of confidence about winning more seats in the polls and coming to power. "
—PTI

Citizenship Amendment Act a discriminatory law that goes against the constitutional values of equality and international human rights
—Amnesty India

32 human skulls found in farmhouse

RAMANAGARA, 11 MARCH

An occultist was arrested after 32 human skulls were found in his farmhouse at Joganahalli village in Ramanagara district. The occultist, Balaram, confessed to police that he used skulls and bones for practising occultism.

The sinister practice came to light after villagers, disturbed by Balaram's nocturnal activities in a graveyard, raised an alarm with Bidadi police. The law enforcement officials took Balaram into custody and he revealed the familial tradition of conducting Burude (skull). The discovery comes days after the sighting of the new moon on Mahashivratri. Forensic Science Laboratory teams from Bengaluru took the skulls for examination and police have registered a case.
—Salar News

Give electoral bonds data today: SC to SBI

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Chastising SBI, Supreme Court on Monday ordered it to disclose the details of the electoral bonds encashed by political parties to the Election Commission by the close of the business hours today and warned the country's largest public sector lender that the court may proceed against it for "wilful disobedience" if it failed to comply with its directions and deadlines.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, while dismissing the State Bank of India's plea seeking extension of time till 30 June to disclose the details, also directed EC to publish the information shared by the bank on its official website by 5 pm on 15 March.

The order was passed by the bench. In a landmark verdict delivered on 15 February, the same five-judge constitution bench had scrapped the Centre's controversial electoral bonds scheme that allowed anonymous political funding, calling it "unconstitutional", and ordered disclosure by the EC of donors, the amount donated by them and the recipients by 13 March.
—PTI

CHINA PROTESTS OVER MODI'S ARUNACHAL VISIT

BEIJING, 11 MARCH

China on Monday said it lodged a diplomatic protest with India over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh last week, reiterating its claim over the area by saying India's moves will "only complicate" the boundary question.

Modi on Saturday dedicated to the nation the Sela Tunnel built at an altitude of 13,000 feet in Arunachal Pradesh that will provide all-weather connectivity to strategically located Tawang and is expected to ensure better movement of troops along the frontier region.

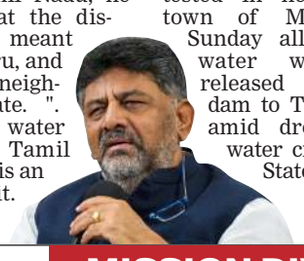
The Rs 825 crore tunnel, constructed on the road connecting Assam's Tezpur to West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, is being billed as the longest bi-lane road tunnel in the world.Sela Tunnel will provide for better movement of troops and weaponry to various forward locations along the Line of Actual Control with China, according to military officials. China, which claims Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet, objects to Indian leaders' visits to the state to highlight its claims which hasnamed the area as Zangnan. India has also repeatedly rejected China's territorial claims over Arunachal Pradesh as well. On being asked about Modi's visit Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said "Zangnan area is Chinese territory".
—PTI

DKS: Will not release Cauvery water to TN at any cost now

BENGALURU, 11 MARCH

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar asserted on Monday that there is no question of releasing Cauvery river water to Tamil Nadu at any cost now.

Amid criticism and protests against the government over allegations that Cauvery water was being released from Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) dam to Tamil Nadu, he clarified that the discharge was meant for Bengaluru, and not for the neighbouring state. ". How much water flows to Tamil Nadu, there is an account for it. Even if water is released today it will take four days to reach there," Shivakumar, who is also the Water Resources Minister said. BJP too had attacked the government alleging that it was keen to protect the interest of DMK, party's alliance partner in Tamil Nadu, at the cost of Karnataka's farmers and citizens. The 'Raitha Hitarakshana Samiti' protested in headquarters town of Mandya on Sunday alleging that water was being released from KRS dam to Tamil Nadu, amid drought and water crisis in the State.
—PTI



257 areas face severe scarcity

A total of 257 localities in Bengaluru have been severely affected by water scarcity, as per BWSSB data. The worst-hit areas in North Zone are DJ Halli and Vaialikaval. In South Zone, HSR Layout, Bommanahalli, Hoskerehalli, Chickpet and Yelachenalli are the worst affected. In West Zone, Rajaji nagar, Peenya, Bagala gunte and Bapujinagar are among the worst-hit localities. *—Salar News*

1ST BATCH OF INDIAN ARMY LEAVES MALDIVES

MALE, 11 MARCH

Indian military personnel stationed in Maldives manning the operations of a helicopter have departed from the island nation after handing over the operations of the chopper to an Indian civilian crew, Maldivian media reported on Monday.

There was no immediate confirmation from Idefence ministry on the withdrawal of the first batch of Indian military personnel from the Maldives. President Mohamed Muizzu, seen as a pro-China leader, has affirmed that no Indian military personnel, not even those in civilian clothing, would be present inside his country.
—PTI

MISSION DIVYASTRA

India test-fires Agni 5 with multiple warhead tech

India carried out first flight test of the indigenously developed Agni-5 missile *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

India on Monday successfully carried out the first flight test of the indigenously developed Agni-5 missile with multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV) under its 'Mission Divyastra', joining a select group of nations having such a capability.

The MIRV feature ensures that a single missile can deploy multiple warheads at different locations, sources said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the scientists of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for the successful test. Agni-5 missile has a range of up to 5,000 km and it can bring almost the entire Asia including the northernmost part of China as well as some regions in Europe under its striking range.

"India today successfully tested Mission Divyastra - the first flight test of indigenously developed Agni-5 missile with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology and joined the select group of nations who have MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry) capability," Singh said on X.

The weapon system is equipped with indigenous avionics systems and high-accuracy sensor packages, which ensured that the re-entry vehicles reached the target points within the desired accuracy, the sources said.

India has already carried out a number of tests of Agni 5 but it was for the first time that the flight test was carried out with MIRV.

In April last year, India successfully carried out the maiden flight trial of an endo-atmospheric interceptor missile from a ship off the coast of Odisha in the Bay of Bengal as part of its ambitious ballistic missile defence programme.

India has been developing capabilities to intercept hostile ballistic missiles both inside and outside the earth's atmospheric limits.
—PTI

EASIER TRAVEL FROM DELHI TO GURUGRAM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the 18.9km Haryana section of the Dwarka Expressway. It aims to improve traffic flow between Delhi and Gurugram on NH-48. Here is all you need to know

- India's first elevated 8-lane expressway
- Directly connects Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi and Gurugram Bypass
- 30 min from Delhi to Dwarka (cuts down travel time by 20 mins)
- Starts from Shiv Murti near Mahipalpur, Delhi, connects to Dwarka Sector 21, Gurugram border, Basai, and concludes near Kherki Daula

29km Total length

18.9km Falls in Haryana

10.1km In Delhi

₹9000cr Total cost (Cost for Haryana section: ₹**4,100** crore)

34m wide elevated road supported by single pillars for 9 km

CRIME BEAT

Davangere: Parish priest booked for raping woman

DAVANGERE, 11 MARCH

A Dalit woman was allegedly raped by B Rajasekhar, pastor of DHM Church, with a promise of marriage in Davangere. The woman filed a complaint at the women's police station. The victim is a teacher in a government school. The victim also mentioned that Rajasekhar duped her and took Rs 25 lakh to Rs 35 lakh. According to the basic investigation, it has been revealed that they have known each other since 2000. A case has been registered against Rajasekhar under IPC Section 376, 354A, 323, 504, 417, and 420. Police said the accused absconded the place soon after the case was registered.
—Salar News

CM inaugurates Indira Canteen at B'luru airport

Govt will open 600 new Indira Canteens across the State

BENGALURU, 11 MARCH

The State government, in collaboration with the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), has inaugurated two Indira Canteens at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA). This initiative aims to provide affordable and quality meals to low-income earners working at the airport, including cab drivers, passengers, and labourers.

In response to demands from labour groups, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced the opening of 600 new Indira Canteens across the State, including Bengaluru. Located near Terminal 1's Parking 7 area, the canteen boasts a spacious layout with a dedicated kitchen. The kitchen is set up at Rs 1.35 crore.

Chief health officer of BBMP Siraj Ahmed Madani told Salar News "We are thrilled to finally launch the Indira Canteen at KIA. This canteen has been a long-standing demand from cab drivers, labourers, and even frequent flyers. We understand that airport food can be expensive, and this canteen offers a convenient and budget-friendly option." The officials also said that the canteen can serve 2,000 customers every day. He said, land was one of the major issue which took time to set up the canteen at a prominent location.

CM Siddaramaiah with DCM DK Shivakumar and others during the inauguration of Indira canteen at KIA on Monday
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

- The menu will be similar to existing canteens, featuring a variety of South Indian dishes known for their taste and affordability

Following the model of other Indira Canteens across the City, it will offer breakfast, lunch, and dinner at subsidised rates. The menu will be similar to existing canteens, featuring a variety of South Indian dishes known for their taste and affordability. The breakfast menu includes Idli, Khara Bhat, Pongal, Puliyogare. The lunch and dinner menu includes White Rice, Sambar, Rice bhats and Curd Rice. Seating areas have been incorporated to enhance the dining experience.

While speaking at the inauguration, he said, "We are starting 188 new Indira canteens as per the demand of drivers. Of these, 40 have already been completed and the rest are being prepared. Breakfast will be available for Rs 5, lunch, dinner will be available for Rs 10." He even criticised the previous government for shutting down some canteens and emphasised his administration's commitment to reopen them to serve the underprivileged.

Former All India Congress Committee vice-president Rahul Gandhi inaugurated the canteen Indira at Jayanagar in Bengaluru by having the first breakfast on 15 August, 2017 in Jayanagar. *—PTI*

The software will bring convenience to those building houses as they do not have to visit the BBMP office ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Online building plan approval facility launched

BENGALURU, 11 MARCH

Karnataka government on Monday launched "Nambike Nakshe, Trust and Verify System", a software to issue automated building plan approval for residential buildings up to four units on plots up to 50x80ft.

It was inaugurated by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar as a part of the Brand Bengaluru initiative.

The software will bring convenience to those building houses as they do not have to frequently visit the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) office. The automated process will reduce government officials' interference with and possible corruption.

To get permission for property construction, applicants must upload the property documents and building plans through a BBMP registered Engineer/Architect visiting the BBMP website link: https://bpas.bbmpgov.in/BPAMSClient4/Default.aspx?TAV-1.

The registered Engineer or Architect will have to carry out the plot inspection and upload the plot The registered Engineer/Architect will inspect the plot and upload the required documents. The application will then be sent to the Karnataka State Remote Sensing Applications Centre (KSRAC) electronically for further processing. The software will scrutinize the plans as per the building bylaws and generate a fee payment challan. Once the fee is paid, the Provisional Building license and Plan in PDF format will be sent to the Engineer/Architect. Applicants have a maximum of 45 days to pay the fee online.
—Salar News

PHOTO: SALAR

Chennai-Mysuru to have another Vande Bharat train

MYSURU, 11 MARCH

The announcement of another Vande Bharat Express Train between Mysuru and Chennai via Bengaluru has brought a significant enhancement to rail connectivity among the three cities. Mysuru and Kodagu MP Pratap Simha said the train will start services from 5 April. According to the Railway Ministry, train number 20663 Mysuru-MGR Chennai Vande Bharat Express will depart from Mysuru at 6am, reaching MGR Chennai at 12.20pm. It will make stops at Mandya, Sir M Visvesvaraya Terminal (SMVT), Baiyappanahalli, Krishnarajapuram, and Katpadi. For the return journey from Chennai, train number 20664 will depart at 5pm and arrive in Mysuru at 11.20pm. In a "proposal presented to Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on 8 March, Simha advocated for direct Vande Bharat express services from Mysuru. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to inaugurate the Vande Bharat train on 12 March. In November 2022, Modi flagged off the inaugural Vande Bharat train between Chennai and Mysuru via Bengaluru.
—Salar News

RAMADAN'S HERE

Clockwise from top left: A perfume seller arranges Attar at his shop on the eve of the first day of Ramadan in Bengaluru on Monday; Muslim men offer prayers after seeing the crescent Moon; A shopkeeper arranges decorative items in Shivajinagar. The first day of Ramadan starts today, where Muslims will observe roza or fast for a whole month. Ramadan is observed as a commemoration of the first revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad. The beginning of the Islamic holy month depends upon the sighting of the crescent moon and is a period of fasting, prayer, reflection and community. Islam uses the lunar, or Hijri calendar, which has 354 days and is based on the lunar phases unlike the Gregorian or solar calendar used by rest of the world.
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

BJP WORKERS PROTEST AGAINST SOMANNA

TUMAKURU, 11 MARCH

BJP workers from four taluks in Tumakuru district protested against the potential candidacy of former minister V Somanna in the upcoming elections. A gathering of BJP members and leaders from Chikkanayakanahalli, Gubbi, Tipaturu and Thuruvekere taluks convened at KB Cross in Tipaturu taluk to voice their opposition to Somanna's candidacy. They expressed concerns that Somanna's candidacy would not benefit Tumakuru district and demanded that JC Madhu Swamy be considered for the ticket instead. Protesters blocked the road and vented their frustration, asserting that if Somanna were to receive the ticket, it could lead to defeat for the BJP in the district. They warned that Somanna's candidacy could cast a shadow over Tumakuru's prospects and accused him of making political manoeuvres detrimental to the region's welfare. *—Salar News*

32 BRAIN HEALTH CLINICS TO HELP NEUROLOGICAL PATIENTS IN STATE

BENGALURU, 11 MARCH

The government opened 32 brain health clinics in every district on Monday under the Department of Health and Welfare's Karnataka Brain Health Initiative.

The clinics will address the increasing cases of neurological issues including stroke, epilepsy and dementia. Each clinic will be staffed with a multidisciplinary care team consisting of a physician, physiotherapist, speech therapist, psychologist, nurse and a district coordinator. Also, for the better functioning of the clinics, training programmes for ASHA workers, community health workers and physicians will be arranged. It aims to integrate care across existing national health programmes related to non-communicable diseases, mental health, and maternal and child health. To create awareness of the initiative, extensive campaigns promoting brain health will be undertaken by the health department.
—Salar News

Govt neglecting Sarvajna's grave: Haveri residents

HAVERI, 11 MARCH

Residents of Masur village in Rattihalli taluk, Haveri, are demanding the development of the Sarvajna's grave, which is the final resting place of a 16th-century poet. Despite the establishment of the Sarvajna Development Authority in 2012, the village has yet to witness any progress. The Sarvajna Development Authority was formed in 2012 to preserve cultural sites and heritage associated with Sarvajna. Sarvajna, originally named Pushpadatta, was renowned for his wisdom and contributions to Kannada literature. His teachings, encapsulated in thousands of tripods, continue to inspire generations. Pramila, the Chairperson of Masur gram panchayat, emphasised the need for setting up the central office of the Sarvajna Development Authority in Masur. Malleshappa Guthyannavar, a resident, urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to allocate a grant of Rs 50 to Rs 100 crore to the authority for the development of the Sarvajna Aikya mantapa similar to the Kudalasangama, the holy shrine dedicated to Basavanna.
—Salar News

'Hegde's remarks on Constitution not personal'

BENGALURU, 11 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday claimed that BJP has believed in the dictatorial attitude and has hatched a conspiracy to change the Constitution. He asked how is it possible that the statement of a senior leader who was in the cabinet and is a sitting MP could be personal.

He was reacting to BJP MP Anantkumar Hegde's comments on BJP amending the Constitution once it secured a two-thirds majority in the Rajya Sabha. BJP distanced itself from Hegde's comments saying it was his personal view and also sought a clarification from him.Speaking to the media at the foundation laying ceremony, Siddaramaiah said, "He had said this earlier even when he was a Union minister. This is a conspiracy of BJP. A two-thirds majority is required for the government to make any kind of change in the Constitution. BJP does not need a majority for the prosperity of the country and the poor; instead, they need a majority to change the Constitution. "Siddaramaiah said BJP is trying to bring back Manusmriti. "BJP's agenda is to change the Constitution into Manusmriti. If the Constitution is changed, there will be bloodshed in this country. The poor and backward classes should oppose this. Therefore, Prime Minister is expressing his thoughts through Anantkumar."
—Salar News

CM Siddaramaiah ***PHOTO: PTI***

State has not seen such severe drought in 40 years, says DKS

BENGALURU, 11 MARCH

Amid the acute water shortage in the City, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said the State had not witnessed such a severe drought in the past three to four decades. He said the next two months are "important" on Monday.

"Though there was drought earlier we had never declared such a large number of taluks as drought-affected," Shivakumar told reporters.

Shivakumar, also in-charge of Bengaluru development, said wherever Cauvery river water has to be supplied, it is being done, but out of 13,900-odd borewells in the City, about 6,900 have become defunct.

State has declared drought in 223 out of 240 taluks, out of which 196 are severely drought affected.

Alleging that BJP-JD(S) was trying to indulge in politics over the issue, Shivakumar said." A separate online system has been brought in for this and officials have been appointed to oversee this," he added. He said the priority is to ensure that there is no wastage of water. *—PTI*

People rush to take water from a water tank at Rajarajeshwari Nagar area in Bengaluru on Monday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Blast case suspect 'in a way' identified: HM

BENGALURU, 11 MARCH

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Thursday said sleuths investigating into the March one blast at the city's popular eatery 'The Rameshwaram Cafe' have "in a way" identified the suspect, and efforts are on to nab him.

He said the investigators are verifying the suspect's identity and are "getting closer to him."

Investigation into the blast, caused by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED), at the quick-service eatery in Brookefield area in information technology corridor in east Bengaluru that left ten people injured, is being carried by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is being assisted by the Central Crime Branch (CCB) of the Bengaluru police.

"Investigations are going on, we are closing in, in a way who the person (Suspect) is has been identified. It has to be confirmed and he has to be nabbed. They are doing it, NIA is doing it, and CCB is doing it with them. They have got good leads," Parameshwara told reporters here.

On the trail of the suspect, the sleuths investigating the case had visited Tumakuru, Ballari, and Kalaburagi.NIA has announced Rs 10 lakh reward for information leading to the arrest of the bomber, and also released pictures and videos of the suspect. *—PTI*

'THIS YEAR IS DIFFERENT'

Bannerghatta Biological Park faces water crisis

MEGHANA PRASAD
BENGALURU, 11 MARCH

Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP), a sanctuary for over 1,900 animals belonging to 94 species, is now facing severe water scarcity.

The scorching summer and dwindling groundwater levels have strained the park's water resources. This perennial challenge in the City forces the park to adopt innovative strategies to ensure the well-being of its inhabitants.

Park officials, led by CEO AV Surya Sen, are determined to ensure the well-being of their animal residents. "The water crisis is a challenge we face every summer, but this year it is different because of the water shortage that is plaguing the City. Our borewells are not as productive as they once were, and the surrounding lakes suffer from receding water levels." Sen told **Salar News**.

Additionally, BBP is exploring alternative water sources. He said discussions are underway with the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) to secure additional water supplies.

Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP) has over 1,900 animals
PHOTO: BANNERUGHATTABIOPARK.ORG

"Purchasing water is also a possibility. BBP is focusing on water conservation efforts for a more sustainable future. Rainwater harvesting systems are being planned to capture and store precious monsoon rains. Recharging existing bore-wells and exploring and planning to create new ones are also on the agenda," he said.

'Frozen food can save animals'

Elephant expert and Chief Wildlife Veterinarian, Dr Prayag Hodigere Siddalingappa, Chief Veterinary Officer (Mobile & Extension), has voiced his opinions on the water shortage and how the animals cope with it. "Animals can die out of heat stroke and dehydration and this applies to all the zoo animals as well. That's why in Mysuru zoo we have initiated a new way of coping with the heat. The vegetables and the meat diet is frozen in water and then given to the animals. This way the animals will be engaged in licking the ice and by the time the ice is melted the food will be thawed and water content is also consumed by them. I hope Bannerghatta will also implement the same," he said.

"But for some animals like hippos and rhinos this is not possible to lick the ice for longer periods. For them, high water content fruits like watermelon, muskmelon, cucumber can be given," he said.
—Salar News

Pragya Thakur gets warrant in 2008 blast case

MUMBAI, 11 MARCH

A special NIA court on Monday issued a bailable warrant against BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur, an accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, for failing to appear before it despite repeated warnings. Thakur and six others are facing trial in the case under provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and the Indian Penal Code (IPC). National Investigation Agency (NIA) court is currently recording statements of the accused under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). Special judge AK Lahoti issued a warrant of Rs 10,000 against Thakur on Monday and asked the probe agency to file a report by 20 March. Last month, the judge had warned Thakur that "necessary action" would be taken against her if she failed to attend the court's proceedings. Six people were killed and over 100 injured when an explosive device strapped on a motorcycle went off near a mosque in Malegaon, a town about 200 km from Mumbai, on 29 September, 2008. Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad initially probed the case before it was transferred to the NIA in 2011. *—PTI*

EC briefs its observers ahead of Lok Sabha election

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Election Commission (EC) on Monday organised a meeting for the observers it will be deploying for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. The day-long briefing for the over 1,800 observers is being addressed by EC officials on different subjects. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar is also likely to address the observers drawn from different services. These police, general and expenditure observers are drawn from services such as IAS, IPS, IRS and other allied services. They are deployed in poll-bound areas ahead of the announcement of elections and work as eyes and ears of the poll authority in the states. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Rajinikanth's fan club members join BJP

CHENNAI, 11 MARCH

A few members of actor Rajinikanth's fan club joined BJP in the presence of its state unit chief K Annamalai on Monday. Annamalai and senior party leader H Raja greeted them with BJP shawls to mark their induction into the party. The event was held ahead of BJP's core committee meeting today, which, among others, is likely to discuss alliance- related matters regarding Lok Sabha polls. BJP is trying to forge a non-DMK, non-AIAMDK-led alliance in the state and former union minister GK Vasan's Tamil Maanila Congress has already joined BJP headed bloc.*—PTI*

Sikkim's SDF pitches 6 names for Assembly polls

GANGTOK, 11 MARCH

Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) on Monday announced its candidates for six assembly seats, days before the announcement of the election schedule, officials said. Former chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling will be contesting from Namchi-Singhithang in a bid to secure a record ninth term as a legislator, they said. For the three seats in Mangan district, SDF has nominated former minister Hissey Lachungpa for Lachen-Mangan (BL-Reserved) constituency, while Gnawong Chopel Lepcha and Sonam Gyatso Lepcha will contest from Kabi-Lungchok (BL-Reserved) and Dzongu (BL-Reserved) seats, respectively. In Gangtok party has nominated Ashish Rai for Arithang seat. *—PTI*

Opposition parties flay CAA rules notification

All Assam Students' Union says it would fight legally

GUWAHATI, 11 MARCH

Activists of the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad protest after the Central government notified the rules of CAA 2019, in Guwahati on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Opposition parties in Assam on Monday flayed BJP government at Centre for implementing the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA), paving the way for granting citizenship to undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan while BJP has welcomed it.

All Assam Students' Union (AASU), which had spearheaded a six-year agitation demanding the identification and deportation of illegal immigrants in 1979, said it would fight legally against Centre's move.

Congress leader of the Opposition in Assam assembly Debabrata Saikia termed the notification of CAA as "unfortunate".

"When Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP had been saying since 2016 that all illegal foreigners will have to leave Assam, they betrayed the people of the state and brought in CAA,' Saikia said.

Assam and several other northeastern states witnessed widespread protests after BJP-led government at the Centre moved towards amending the Citizenship Act in 2019.

A section of the people of the region were scared that if the CAA was implemented, it would endanger their identity and livelihood.

Chief advisor of AASU and North East Students' Organisation Samujjal Bhattacharjya said that they will not accept the CAA and will continue to protest against it.

AIUDF MLA Ashraful Hussain said that BJP has implemented CAA before the Lok Sabha polls as it is 'greedy for Bangladeshi Hindu votes'. 'They have done it only to win this election and also to fulfill BJP's Hindutva agenda by polarising the Hindu votes,' he said.

CAA was passed in December 2019 and subsequently got the president's assent but there were protests in several parts of the country against it. Over a hundred people lost their lives during the anti-CAA protests or police action.

It subsequently led to the creation of two new political parties in the state - Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), led by then-AASU leader Lurinjyoti Gogoi and Raijor Dal, headed by Akhil Gogoi. *—PTI*

AHEAD OF LS POLLS

PM inaugurates 114 NH projects worth ₹1,00,000cr

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari and Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar inspects the Haryana Section of the Dwarka Expressway on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

- **Among key National Highway (NH) projects, Modi inaugurated Haryana section of the landmark Dwarka Expressway**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for 114 National Highway projects across the country worth about Rs 1 lakh crore.

Among key National Highway (NH) projects, Modi inaugurated Haryana section of the landmark Dwarka Expressway.

The total length of Dwarka Expressway is 29km, out of which 18.9km falls in Haryana, while the remaining 10.1km is in Delhi. This expressway will help improve traffic flow and ease congestion between Delhi and Gurugram on NH-48.

As many as 42 other projects worth Rs 20,500 crore in different states were inaugurated across the country.

Modi also laid the foundation stone for various NH projects across the country.

These include 14 packages of Bengaluru - Kadappa - Vijayawada Expressway worth Rs 14,000 crore in Andhra Pradesh; six packages of Belgaum - Hungund - Raichur Section of NH-748A worth Rs 8,000 crore in Karnataka; three packages of Shamli - Ambala Highway worth Rs 4,900 crore in Haryana; two packages of Amritsar - Bathinda corridor worth Rs 3,800 crore in Punjab; along with 39 other projects worth Rs 32,700 crore in different states.

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari were present at the event.

Meanwhile, Modi is scheduled to visit Kerala's Palakkad on 15 March to campaign for BJP candidates for the Lok Sabha polls. Following this, on 17 March, Modi will undertake another visit to Pathanamthitta to rally support for Anil K Antony, BJP candidate and son of Congress stalwart AK Antony. Sources said that Modi will conduct a roadshow upon his arrival in Palakkad. *—PTI*

Wrestler Chandrahar Patil joins Shiv Sena (UBT)

MUMBAI, 11 MARCH

Wrestler Chandrahar Patil on Monday joined Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) and he is likely to contest the Lok Sabha polls from Sangli in the western part of Maharashtra.

Patil, who has won the state's top wrestling competition 'Maharashtra Kesari' two times, joined the outfit in the presence of Thackeray and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut.

Thackeray said, "Chandrahar had asked me to give some hint. I think you people have already decided, then no one can change it now."

Incidentally, Patil's candidature for the Lok Sabha polls was announced earlier by Prakash Ambedkar-led Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA), which is in talks with Maha Vikas Aghadi for an alliance.

Thackeray's announcement goes against the agreement reached within the MVA last week that none of the constituents would unilaterally declare candidates. *—PTI*

HC REFUSES TO GRANT STAY ON FACT-CHECK UNIT

MUMBAI, 11 MARCH

Bombay High Court on Monday refused to grant an interim stay on setting up a fact-checking unit (FCU) under the recently amended Information Technology Rules to identify fake and false content on social media concerning the business of Union government.

A single bench of Justice AS Chandurkar said no case was made out to direct the government to continue its earlier statement that it would not notify the FCU pending hearing of petitions against the IT Rules.

The order was passed on a bunch of applications filed by standup comedian Kunal Kamra and others seeking a stay on the notification of the FCU pending the final disposal of their pleas against the IT Rules.

The pleas against the IT Rules were referred to Justice Chandurkar after a division bench of Justices Gautam Patel and Neela Gokhale delivered a split verdict in January.

While Justice Patel struck down the impugned Rules, terming them unconstitutional, Justice Gokhale upheld the same and dismissed the petitions.

Justice Patel had said the Rules amount to censorship, but Justice Gokhale had opined they do not have any chilling effect on free speech.

The division bench had also differed on whether a stay should be granted on setting up the FCU pending a hearing on the pleas by the third judge.

Under the IT Rules, if the FCU comes across or is informed about any posts that are fake, false, and contain misleading facts about the business of the government, it would flag off the same to social media intermediaries.

Once such a post is flagged off, the intermediary has the option of either taking down the post or putting a disclaimer on the same.

In taking the second option, the intermediary loses its safe harbour/immunity and stands liable for legal action. *—PTI*

'VOICE WAS NOT HEARD'

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge welcomes Churu MP Rahul Kaswan as he joins the party, in New Delhi, on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Churu MP quits BJP over farmers' stir, joins Cong

JAIPUR/NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Churu MP Rahul Kaswan on Monday resigned from BJP and joined Congress in the presence of party President Mallikarjun Kharge in the national capital as the voice of farmers is being neglected by BJP.

After joining Congress, Kaswan, who was denied a ticket by BJP for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, said he felt his "voice was not being heard" in the party.

Kharge said the party needs such people who have fought against power.

"I heartily welcome Rahul Kaswan ji on joining Congress Party. I am happy that Kaswan ji, who fought against feudal people and has supported the farmers' issue, has joined the Congress Party," Kharge said.

Kaswan said, "I am grateful to Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi along with Rajasthan Congress Chief Govind Singh Dotasra and Party's state in charge Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa.

I am thankful to Narendra Modi as I got the chance to work for the people for 10 years. There are many such issues on which I decided to join the Congress Party."

Kharge also referred to Modi's speeches in different languages across the country and said he wants to have "mastery" of everything but continues his habit of intimidating people. *—PTI*

CONG SEEKS HC NOD IN STAY ON IT RECOVERY

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Indian National Congress (INC) on Monday moved Delhi High Court seeking a stay on Income Tax notice for recovery of more than Rs 105 crore as outstanding tax. High Court will hear the plea on Tuesday.

On Friday, Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) order dismissed the stay plea against Income Tax Department proceedings of recovery and freezing of their bank accounts.

Income Tax Department had recovered Rs 65 crore from the accounts of Indian National Congress out of the total outstanding tax dues of Rs 115 crore.

In the complaint, Congress said Income Tax Department has enforced its law by encashing some of the balances lying with the banks without waiting for the outcome of the hearing scheduled before the bench. *—ANI*

WON'T GIVE UP CHHINDWARA, SAYS KAMAL NATH

BHOPAL, 11 MARCH

Congress veteran Kamal Nath on Monday ruled out the possibility of contesting the upcoming Lok Sabha poll from Jabalpur and said he will not leave Chhindwara, his political stronghold in Madhya Pradesh.

Chhindwara Lok Sabha seat is currently represented by his son Nakul Nath.

Asked if he will contest the upcoming Lok Sabha election from Jabalpur, a prominent parliamentary segment in Mahakoshal region of MP, Kamal Nath said, "There is no plan. I will not leave Chhindwara in any case."

Asked about Congress leaders switching sides in Madhya Pradesh, he said, "Suresh Pachouri (former Union minister) joined BJP. It was his wish." Veteran leader Pachouri joined the ruling BJP on Saturday.

On Monday, two other former Congress MLAs Arunoday Choubey and Shivdayal Bagri also joined BJP. Kamal Nath said Choubey had already resigned from Congress.

On speculation that Congress leader Deepak Joshi might also join BJP, Kamal Nath said, "Wo toh wahin ke the (he belonged to it)."

Deepak Joshi, son of former BJP chief minister Kailash Joshi, joined Congress before the 2023 assembly elections and unsuccessfully contested on its ticket from Khategaon seat in Dewas district. *—PTI*

Cong leader moves SC on EC appointments

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

A plea has been filed in Supreme Court seeking to restrain the Centre from appointing new Election Commissioners (EC) as per a 2023 law, the provisions of which have been challenged in the apex court.

Two vacancies of ECs have arisen following the resignation of EC Arun Goel and Anup Chandra Pandey's retirement.

The plea has been filed by Congress leader Jaya Thakur, who has challenged the provisions of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and terms of office) Act, 2023.

In her application, Thakur informed the court that during the pendency of her plea, in which a notice was issued on 12 January, "one member of EC namely Arun Goel gave resignation on 9 March, 2024 which has been accepted by the President".

"That petitioner most respectfully submitted that in view of facts that election for Lok Sabha Election 2024 may be announced shortly, therefore appointment of member of new election commissioners is required immediately, for that this court has given clear verdict in the case of 'Anoop Baranwal Versus Union of India' (2 March, 2023 verdict) about the appointment process...," the plea said.

Opposition has accused Modi government of having defied Supreme Court by dropping the Chief Election Commissioner (CJI) from the selection panel.

In its March 2023 order, Supreme Court had said that the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and the CJI would pick the Chief Election Commissioner and the ECs. *—PTI*

3 aides of Shahjahan held in Sandeshkhali ED attack case

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

- **CBI had summoned nine close aides and associates of Sheikh for questioning in the case on Monday**

CBI on Monday arrested three alleged associates of suspended TMC leader Shahajahan Sheikh including his security guard in connection with the 5 January attack on an Enforcement Directorate team.

CBI took into custody Sheikh's security guard Didar Baksh Molla, who is the complainant in one of the three FIRs registered by the West Bengal Police after the attacks. These FIRs have been handed over to CBI by Calcutta High Court.Besides Baksh Molla, CBI also arrested Jaiuddin Molla, the Panchayat Pradhan of Sarberia village, and another person Faruk Akunji.All three are close associates of Sheikh who is considered the mastermind behind the attack, the officials said. "They will be produced before a magistrate tomorrow," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement.CBI had summoned nine close aides and associates of Sheikh for questioning in the case on Monday. Sheikh is in CBI custody till 14 March.

He was arrested by the state police on February 29, a day after the high court ordered that CBI, ED or West Bengal police could arrest him.

SC dismisses WB's plea

In a setback to the government, Supreme Court on Monday dismissed its plea challenging a Calcutta High Court order transferring to the CBI the probe into the 5 January attack on Enforcement Directorate (ED) team in Sandeshkhali, allegedly by supporters of the now suspended Sheikh.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta, ordered expunging certain remarks and observations made against the state government and the police in the 5 March order of the high court. *—PTI*

IF DEMANDS NOT MET

Land subsidence-hit Joshimath residents to boycott LS polls

GOPESHWAR, 11 MARCH

- **Around 1,000 people had to leave their homes in Joshimath in early 2023**

Joshimath residents affected by land subsidence held a protest against Uttarakhand government's rehabilitation policy and threatened to boycott the general elections if no action on their demands was taken within 15 days.

Under the banner of Mool Niwasi Swabhiman Sangathan, the protesters carrying ploughs, sickles and spades took out a rally in Joshimath on Sunday and held a public meeting at the sub-divisional office. They also submitted to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate a memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister.

The memorandum included a list of 15 demands, including initiating remedial measures for the land-subsidence problem in Joshimath, revision of the rehabilitation policy and a displacement allowance for the affected people.

"Land subsidence has badly hit farming, animal husbandry, horticulture and other traditional means of livelihood in the town. We want the state government to revise its rehabilitation policy and relocate affected people in the safer zones within the town rather than outside it," Mool Niwasi Swabhiman Sangathan President Bhuvan Uniyal said.

"If positive action on our demands is not initiated within 15 days, we will be forced to boycott the upcoming Lok Sabha polls," he said.

Around 1,000 people had to leave their homes in Joshimath in early 2023 when large cracks appeared on the walls and floors due to land subsidence. *—PTI*

Over 700 buildings have been affected by Joshimath land subsidence *PHOTO: PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

6 dead after speeding car hits another in Rewari

REWARI, 11 MARCH

At least six people were killed and six more injured in a major road accident at Haryana's Rewari on Sunday late night, police said. Among the dead were four women and two men, officers added. "We got a call at night. As one of the cars stopped midway due to a flat tyre, the other rammed it from behind before it overturned and fell into a ditch," Dharuhera Station House Officer Jagdish told ANI. Sharing details about the condition of the injured persons, the SHO told ANI, "The car that stopped after a tyre burst had six women and the driver. While four women died on the spot, the driver succumbed to his injuries at the hospital. The other car had five male passengers of whom one died. A total of six died in the accident." *—ANI*

Ch'garh: Naxalites kill man on suspicion of being a cop

BIJAPUR, 11 MARCH

A 35-year-old man was allegedly abducted and killed by Naxalites on suspicion of being a police informer in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said on Monday. The victim, Pusu Hemla, who hailed from Telipetha village under Kutru police station limits, was found dead on the Telipetha-Patakutru road by some locals this morning, an official said. The police were alerted, and a team was dispatched to the scene, he said.As per preliminary information, Hemla, who was residing in Kutru, had gone to his village on 8 March for some work, the official said. A group of Naxalites allegedly kidnapped the victim and killed him, he said. A Maoist pamphlet was recovered from the spot, in which they Maoists claimed that Hemla was acting as a police informer, the official said. *—PTI*

Cops destroy poppy worth ₹10 cr in Odisha tiger reserve

BARIPADA, 11 MARCH

Odisha Police have destroyed poppy plants worth over Rs 10 crore inside Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district, an official said on Monday. Acting on a tip-off, a police team on Sunday destroyed poppy plantations over 15.64 acres deep inside the protected area, Mayurbhanj Superintendent of Police S Susree said. The Mayurbhanj Police have registered two cases in Jashipur Police Station in this connection, she said. In February this year, poppy plants worth Rs 26 lakh were destroyed by the Mayurbhanj Police inside the tiger reserve, the Superintendent of Police (SP) said.*—ANI*

Court grants cops more time for Parl breach probe

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

A city court on Monday granted Delhi Police more time to complete its invitation in Parliament security breach case. Additional Sessions Judge Hardeep Kaur granted 45 more days to police to conclude the investigation, after the prosecution moved an application on their behalf, claiming certain reports were still awaited and scrutinising voluminous data will take time. The Delhi Police had urged the judge to grant them three more months to complete the investigation. In a major security breach on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack, few people -- jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during Zero Hour, and shouted slogans before being overpowered by MPs. *—PTI*

DRUGS WORTH ₹111 CR SEIZED IN TN VILLAGE

The drugs were stored for being smuggled to Sri Lanka

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI, 11 MARCH

Trichy Customs Preventive Unit thwarted a major smuggling operation and seized a large cache of hashish worth Rs 110 crore and ganja worth Rs. 1.05 crore from Mimisal village of Tamil Nadu's Pudukottai district.

Acting on a tip-off that narcotics was being stored for smuggling to Sri Lanka, the Central Intelligence Unit of Tiruchirappalli Customs raided a prawn farm near the Mimisal Panchayat Marriage Hall.

The Trichy customs had seized ganja and hashis from Mimisal village of Tamil Nadu's Pudukottai district PHOTO: ANI

"On receiving information that huge quantities of Narcotic substances like Hashish and Ganja etc. are stored in a shed located on a prawn farm in Mimisal Village, opposite to Mimisal Panchayat Marriage Hall, Avudayar Koil, Pudukottai District for being smuggled out of India to Sri Lanka, the officers of Central Intelligence Unit, Tiruchirappalli Customs Preventive Commissionerate rushed to the area. The shed was found locked and there were no persons in the area," the release from the Tirchy Customs said.

In the presence of independent witnesses, the lock was broken, and a thorough search revealed 48 bags containing suspected narcotics.

Due to a lack of power supply at the shed, the confiscated bags were transported to a nearby customs office for further examination. Testing confirmed the presence of 100kg of hashish and 876kg of dry ganja.

- The goods were seized under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 and the Customs Act

The goods were seized under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 and the Customs Act. Further investigation is under progress.

The seized narcotics have been confiscated under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, and the Customs Act.

The Trichy Customs Department is currently conducting further investigations to identify those involved in the smuggling attempt. *—ANI*

TEST ON 5 MAY

NEET UG registration extended till 16 March

NEW DELHI 11 MARCH

The National Testing Agency on Monday extended the registration window for the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG) 2024 examination till 16 March.

According to an official statement, the NEET UG 2024 will be conducted on 5 May, 2024, from 2pm to 5.20pm , throughout the country and in 14 cities outside India in pen & paper (offline) mode.

The registration for the online application forms for NEET (UG) 2024 has been ongoing since 9 February. "During this time, we have received representations from stakeholders regarding the changes in NEET (UG) 2024 and the extension of the registration window," read the official statement further.

Announcing the extension of NEET 2024 registration last date, the NTA said, "Candidates should note that this is a one-time opportunity, so they are advised to use it carefully as no further chance will be given for applying for NEET (UG)-2024. Please make a note of this and fill the online application form accordingly."

The registration for the online application forms for NEET (UG) 2024 has been ongoing since 9 February PHOTO: PIXABAY

In recent years, the number of students registering for NEET has been on the rise, with 1,872,339 students registering in 2022 and 2,087,462 in 2023. The increase in registrations also signifies a rise in competition among aspirants.

In 2022, 993,069 candidates qualified for the exam with a qualifying rate of 56.21 per cent, while in 2023, 1,145,976 candidates qualified with a qualifying rate of 56.27 per cent.

The trend of increasing registrations and competition is expected to continue in NEET 2024, with around 22 lakh applications anticipated this year. *—PTI*

Prof kills daughter and self with surgical blade

HISAR, 11 MARCH

A 35-year-old professor and his eight-year-old daughter were found dead at his office at Lala Lajpat Rai University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (LUVAS) in Haryana's Hisar, with surgical blade cuts at their throat, police said.

PHOTO: X

The professor, who was suffering from clinical depression, allegedly slit her daughter's throat with a surgical blade before using the same weapon to slit his own, the police added.Further, according to officers, the deceased professor, identified as Sandeep Goyal, had left the house on his scooter on Sunday at 4pm with his daughter, Sanaya, on the pretext of taking her for a ride on his scooter. When the father-daughter duo did not return for hours, Goyal's wife went to the university to search for them, police said.When she noticed Goyal's scooter parked outside the Department of Veterinary Surgery and Radiology office, she went in but found the office door locked from inside, following which she informed the security guard. As they broke open the gate, the mortal remains of the professor and his daughter were found in a pool of blood following which the police were called. *—ANI*

AGAINST 5 MARCH ORDER

SC junks M'rashtra's plea against Saibaba's acquittal in Maoist case

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Monday rejected a Maharashtra government application seeking a stay on the acquittal of former Delhi University professor GN Saibaba and others in the Maoist links case, and said the Bombay High Court order clearing them of the charges is "prima facie well-reasoned".

A bench of justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta, however, admitted the state government's appeal against the 5 March order of the High Court.

The bench also rejected the oral request of Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the Maharashtra government, for early listing of the appeal and said it will come up for hearing in due course of time.

PHOTO: PTI

"There cannot be any urgency to reverse order acquittal. Had it been the other way around, we would have considered," the bench told Raju and asked him to file for expeditious hearing at a later stage."Prima facie, we find that the high court order is well reasoned," the bench said, with Justice Mehta adding, "it is a hard-earned acquittal. How many years this man spent in jail?"

Raju said he needs to file some documents in the matter, especially papers related to the sanction obtained for prosecuting Saibaba under anti-terror law UAPA.The bench said, "Law is that there is always presumption of innocence, and if there is acquittal order, then the presumption of innocence is fortified."It noted that although Raju has not pressed the application for stay of the high court verdict, to avoid any confusion at a later stage, it has been rejected.Saibaba, who is wheelchair-bound, was lodged in the Nagpur Central Jail since his arrest in the case in 2014. The trial court had held Saibaba and others guilty under various provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) *— PTI*

Man arrested for sharing info with Pak

MUMBAI, 11 MARCH

- ATS found the accused was in touch with the PIO from November 2021 to May 2023 via Facebook and WhatsApp and shared the sensitive information multiple times

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad has arrested a 30-year-old man from Navi Mumbai for allegedly sharing information about restricted areas in the country with a Pakistan-based intelligence operative (PIO), the ATS said on Monday.

During a probe, the ATS found the accused was in touch with the PIO from November 2021 to May 2023 via Facebook and WhatsApp and shared the sensitive information multiple times through those social media platforms, the ATS said in a release.

The accused, who was staying in Navi Mumbai, adjoining the state capital, shared information about restricted areas in India with the PIO, it said.

A case has been registered against the man and the PIO and the Navi Mumbai unit of ATS is conducting further probe into it, the release said. *—PTI*

Bandh for separate state hits Nagaland

KOHIMA, 11 MARCH

Normal life was affected in six districts of eastern Nagaland on Monday due to an indefinite shutdown called by Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) to press for its demand for a separate state, officials said.

Shops and commercial establishments remained closed and most vehicles were off the roads as the ENPO, the apex body of seven Naga tribes in the region, called for the shutdown to press for its demand.

Power department, medical, fire and other emergency services, besides media and weddings were, however, exempted from the purview of the bandh.

The ENPO demands that a separate 'Frontier Naga Territory' state be carved out of the six districts of Mon, Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphire, Noklak and Shamator.

Shops and commercial establishments remained closed and most vehicles were off the roads as the Naga tribes in the region called for the shutdown to demand a separate state PHOTO: PTI

The decision to call for the shutdown was taken at the ENPO's headquarters in Tuensang district on Sunday, sources in the body said.

The ENPO has resolved not to allow any political party to campaign in the region for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls till the settlement of their demand.

- The ENPO has resolved not to allow any political party to campaign in the region for the upcoming polls

On 5 March, ENPO declared a "public emergency" in the region to press for their demand. On 8 March, it enforced a 12-hour shutdown from 6am as part of "public emergency". *—PTI*

SC TO EXAMINE HC RULING OVER CHILD PORN

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Terming as "atrocious", the Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear a plea challenging a Madras High Court ruling which said that mere downloading and watching child pornography is not an offence under the POCSO Act and the Information Technology law.

The High Court had, on 11 January, quashed the criminal proceedings against a 28-year-old man charged with downloading on his mobile phone pornographic content involving children.

The present-day children are grappling with the serious issue of watching porn and instead of punishing them, the society must be "mature enough" to educate them, it had also said. *—PTI*

HC asks for cops' stand on Sharjeel Imam's bail plea

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

- The case was initially registered for the offence of sedition and section 13 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act was invoked later

The Delhi High Court on Monday sought the stand of the city police on student activist Sharjeel Imam's plea seeking bail in connection with a 2020 communal riots case involving allegations of sedition and unlawful activities.

A bench of Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Manoj Jain issued a notice to the Delhi Police on Imam's appeal against a trial court order rejecting his bail application. The counsel appearing for the accused said the trial court wrongly refused to grant him bail even though he has undergone more than half of the maximum sentence that can be awarded to him in case of a conviction.

As per the prosecution, Imam made speeches at Jamia Millia Islamia on 13 December, 2019, and at the Aligarh Muslim University on 16 December, 2019, where he threatened to cut off Assam and the rest of the northeast from the country.

Imam was booked in the case registered by the Delhi Police's Special Branch. The case was initially registered for the offence of sedition and section 13 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act was invoked later. He has been in custody since 28, January 2020, in the matter. The trial court, while refusing to grant him bail on 17 February, ruled that Imam's custody could be extended for a further period in "exceptional circumstances" after hearing the prosecution's case. *—ANI*

Satyarthi starts movement for global compassion

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Nobel Peace Laureate and child rights activist Kailash Satyarthi on Monday unveiled his latest endeavour, the 'Satyarthi Movement for Global Compassion' (SMGC), that aims to reform global governance through compassionate dialogue and action.

The initiative was launched during the Laureates and Leaders for Children Conclave held here.

Satyarthi said this initiative seeks to mend the fractures of our world by rallying Nobel laureates, global leaders, businesses, academia, youth and civil society towards the monumental task of constructing a fair, inclusive and just society.

Addressing the audience, Satyarthi said for decades, he has advocated for the globalisation of compassion. Today, we embark on the next phase of this journey, he said.

"I implore each of you to recognise the seed of compassion within yourselves and join this movement. Compassion will serve as the binding force for our fractured world," he said. Questioned about the necessity of such a movement, the Nobel laureate highlighted the plethora of challenges humanity faces today."

Despite unprecedented wealth, resources and knowledge, our world is plagued by conflict, widening inequalities, hatred, climate crises and looming threats of Artificial Intelligence," he said. *—PTI*

NEW INITIATIVE TO SAVE LIFE

Novel biomarker test may help avoid accidents

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Scientists have developed a new blood test that can accurately detect sleep-deprived drivers by using biomarkers that may help avoid road accidents in the future.

The experts at Monash University in Australia, and the University of Birmingham, UK, noted that the level of sleep deprivation increases the risk of serious injury or fatality in critical situations.

The study, published in the journal Science Advances, shows that the biomarker used in the test accurately predicted when the study volunteers had been awake for over 24 hours under controlled laboratory conditions. Future work could examine whether these biomarkers are evident in saliva or breath and lead to a roadside test.

Scientists have developed a new initiative by using biomarkers that may help avoid road accidents in the future PHOTO: PIXABAY

The test detected whether individuals had been awake for 24 hours with a 99.2 per cent probability of being correct when compared to well-rested samples, the researchers said. When a single sample was considered without the well-rested comparison (similar to a diagnostic blood test), it dropped to 89.1 per cent, which was still very high, they said. With about 20 per cent of road accidents worldwide caused by sleep deprivation, researchers hope the discovery may inform future tests to quickly and simply identify sleep-deprived drivers.

The biomarker could also be developed for other situations where sleep deprivation may lead to catastrophic consequences, such as in safety-critical workplaces.

"While more work is required, this is a promising first step," said Anderson, Professor at the University of Birmingham. The researchers noted that there is strong evidence that less than five hours of sleep is associated with unsafe driving.

However, driving after being awake for 24 hours is at least comparable to more than double the Australian legal limit of alcohol performance-wise, they said. The test may be also ideal for future forensic use but further validation is required. Study first author Katy Jeppe, from Monash University, said it was difficult to say how soon the test could be developed for post-accident use. "Next steps would be to test it in a less controlled environment and maybe under forensic conditions, particularly if it was to be used as evidence for crashes involving drivers falling asleep," Jeppe said. "Given it is blood, the test is more limited in a roadside context, but future work could examine whether our metabolites, and therefore the biomarker, are evident in saliva or breath," the researcher said. This sleep deprivation biomarker is based on 24 hours or more awake but can detect down to 18 hours awake. *—ANI*

TIBETAN PROTEST

Police detain a Tibetan Youth Congress supporter during a protest to mark Tibetan National Uprising Day outside the Chinese Embassy, on Monday. ***PHOTO: PTI***

Byju's: Largest ed-tech firm is struggling

In 2018, Byju Raveendran was the toast of India's start-up world as his eponymous edtech company, Byju's, was crowned a unicorn.

Through the pandemic, as schools shut, Byju's kept growing and expanding - until it all started to unravel.

Once India's leading privately-held company valued at $22bn (£17.38bn), it is now regarded by some as a cautionary tale for domestic start-ups, as investment company BlackRock recently slashed its valuation to $1bn.

On 23 February, a majority of shareholders in Byju's parent company Think & Learn (T&L) voted to remove Mr Raveendran as CEO during an extraordinary general meeting (EGM), citing allegations of "mismanagement and failures."

Raveendran and his family deny the allegations, disputing the vote's validity and claiming it violated internal company laws requiring at least one founder-director present at the EGM. In a letter to employees the next day, Raveendran called the meeting a "farce" and challenged it in court.

Karnataka High Court has temporarily halted the implementation of the resolutions passed in EGM as it hears the case.

The events were the latest in a growing mountain of legal and financial crises the edtech firm has been battling in recent years.

In the past year alone, Byju's has faced mounting debt, unhappy investors, lawsuits by lenders, an investigation by India's financial crimes agency, layoffs of thousands of employees, delayed salaries and a liquidity crisis.

Four of Byju's investors took the company to the National Company Law Tribunal to halt its rights issue

In January, after several missed deadlines, T&L had reported a consolidated loss of Rs 82.3bn ($1bn, 792.3m) for 2022. The company is yet to present its audited financials for 2023, missing the December deadline it had set last year.

Byju's has also been accused by customers of pressure selling - allegedly coercing parents into buying courses they couldn't afford. Social media is flooded with complaints accusing the company of jeopardising the savings of vulnerable people. In 2021, the firm dismissed these allegations as "baseless and motivated."

Edtech firm founded by Raveendran was most valuable firm ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

This month, Byju's told its employees their salaries would be delayed as it could not access funds raised during a rights issue. A month ago, the company said it had struggled to pay salaries due to lack of money.

Byju's, established in 2011 as an online tutoring firm, initially focused on classes for schoolchildren and competitive exam preparation in India.

In 2021, the company spent billions to expand globally, acquiring other edtech start-ups and firms such as Aakash, Toppr, Epic, and Great Learning.

The current standoff between Byju's and its investors stems from the company's efforts to address a cash crunch by proposing a rights issue, seeking to raise up to $200m - an invitation to existing shareholders to purchase additional new shares in the company.

Four Byju's investors filed a petition with the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), a quasi-judicial authority overseeing corporate disputes, seeking to block the rights issue.

The tribunal instructed Byju's to keep the proceeds from the rights issue in a separate account until the resolution of the investors' petition. Investors have petitioned the Supreme Court, seeking a hearing in the event of Byju's challenging the tribunal's decision.

A lead sponsor of the Indian cricket team till 2023, Byju's is in arbitration with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) after being sued for allegedly failing to fulfil its sponsorship obligations and not paying dues of 1.58bn rupees.

On 22 February, India's financial crimes agency, Enforcement Directorate, issued a look-out notice against Raveendran in connection with alleged foreign exchange violations involving Rs 93bn.

.Last year, three of its board members - V Ravishankar of Sequoia Capital (now Peak XV Partners), Vivian Wu of Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, and Russell Dreisenstock of Prosus - resigned, leaving just Raveendran, his wife Divya Gokulnath and brother Riju Raveendran on the board.

Subramanian says sometimes it's a good thing for companies to "fail and fail fast".

Instead of chasing valuation, companies should put in place robust business practices and "play the long game", he says. "Raising money and going for valuation every few days is all humbug."

Others, however, feel that the company's problems should not be seen only through the lens of profit and loss.

Srivastava describes this as a "fast-food model of education" which has "been converted to a machine for profit-making without much proof that it produces any public good".

Ganesh says that while a comeback for the CEO would be "a daunting task",

Raveendran is still "a terrific entrepreneur" who built a large business and raised huge amounts of money. Besides, a "reasonable, stable outcome" for the company is also important for India's start-up ecosystem, he adds.

"This is India's largest start-up and the world is watching."

—BBC News

SALAR ساڵار

Pro-Modi films swamp voters ahead of election

A grimacing police official, staring into the camera, declares her intent to publicly shoot dead "leftists" while attacking "left-liberal, pseudo-intellectuals" as well as students of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), a left-leaning university space in the cross-hairs of Modi government.

Men in skull caps, the visuals intercut with bloody violence, declare that Rohingya Muslims will soon displace Hindus and make for half of India's population, while a harrowed Hindu woman fighting against these men says she wants to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

A biopic on the early 20th century Hindu nationalist ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar has a voiceover that insists that India would have freed itself of British colonial rule over three decades before it did, if not for Mahatma Gandhi.

As India's nearly one billion voters get ready to pick their national government in general elections between March and May, Modi and his BJP are receiving campaign support from an atypical ally: cinema.

Many of these stories peddle Islamophobic conspiracies commonly circulated among Hindu right-wing networks that are aligned with the BJP's political agenda. At least 10 such films have either been released recently or are poised to hit theatres and television in this election season

Two of the upcoming films, Accident or Conspiracy: Godhra, and The Sabarmati Report, claim to "reveal" the "real story" behind the Godhra train burning of 2002 where 59 Hindu pilgrims died in a fire that was the spark for anti-Muslim riots orchestrated by Hindu right-wing groups that claimed over 1,000 lives, mostly Muslims. The riots happened when Modi was the state's Chief Minister.

Another film, Aakhir Palaayan Kab Tak? (Until when will we need to flee?), shows a Hindu "exodus" purportedly due to Muslims. Then there's Razakar, a multilingual release on what it calls the "silent genocide" of Hindus in Hyderabad by Razakars, a paramilitary volunteer force that inflicted mass violence before and after India's independence in 1947. The film has been produced by a

A growing trend

The surge in such movies builds on a pattern also seen before the 2019 elections when Modi returned to power for a second time. On the eve of that vote, a clutch of films tried to bolster the BJP's popularity.

Some tried to take down the ruling party's critics, like the Accidental Prime Minister (PM), a searing take on Modi's predecessor, Manmohan Singh. Others stoked jingoism, like Uri: The Surgical Strike, which recreated the military strikes that Indian forces made inside Pakistan-controlled Kashmir in retaliation against a terror attack on an Indian military camp in Kashmir's Uri region in September 2016. The film ended with a scene of a pleased-looking Modi-resembling prime minister. Both films were released in the same week, days before the elections.

But Bhaskar said that while the trend isn't new, it has grown since 2014, when Modi came to power, starting off with the changed way that the Indian film industry dealt with historical representations.

Another film, The Kerala Story, panned widely for inaccuracies in depicting an alleged ISIL/ISIS conspiracy to lure Christian and Hindu girls to join the group, played a part in igniting societal tensions among communities, leading to violence in the western Indian region of Akola in Maharashtra.

Fear and opportunism

Film industry insiders attribute this new genre of films to a mix of unease, opportunism and a helpful nudge from the establishment.

A number of industry insiders this writer contacted refused to speak on record, for fear of retribution.

Many insiders said these instances had produced a "chilling effect" on other creators. "Often, ideas get nixed or get altered at the pre-production stage itself, because makers are now constantly censoring themselves and anticipating the trouble that the content might court in the current political climate," said a film producer, requesting anonymity.

Here to stay?

Balakrishnan, the director, said that such "weak films" would stay limited to a few filmmakers. "Some are trying to ride a wave, but this won't become a mainstream phenomenon.

Bhaskar, the retired JNU professor, said this was a sign that the trend was only going to deepen. "This is no longer episodic, or tied to any events like the polls anymore," Bhaskar said. If anything, she added, the scale of such films is now going to grow. "You will now see big-banner, big-budget films being made to serve propaganda purposes."

—Al Jazeera

Savarkar, Article 370 are films that tries to bolster BJP's popularity ahead of general elections in the country held between March and May ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

LETTERS

Write to us at salar@salar.news

Death, disaster and redemption - England's 1984-85 tour of India

It was still dark outside, but the phone next to Baxter's head in his Delhi hotel room was ringing, loudly and insistently. Baxter had only arrived in the city a few hours earlier. As Test Match Special's producer, he was in India to cover the England men's team's tour of the country. As he blearily lifted the receiver and listened to the voice on the other end though, it was the start of an assignment that would test him, and the team he was following, in ways they could never have foreseen.

The tour began on Halloween - 31 October 1984 - and continued until early February the following year.

In those three months, India would be convulsed by political assassinations, sectarian turmoil and an industrial disaster that rivalled Chernobyl in its loss of life and lasting ecological damage.

Yet, through the turmoil, the tour stayed on the road, taking in 16 venues, 12 first-class matches (including five Test matches) and six one-day internationals (ODIs) from Guwahati in the north-eastern Assam region of India, to Colombo in Sri Lanka, via all compass points in between.

On several occasions, the tour looked certain to be cancelled only to be resurrected. By the end of it, a young, inexperienced England team under the captaincy of David Gower would do what no other England team had done before, and only one has managed since: come from behind to win a Test series in India.

While India could not match the depth of the West Indies at that time, they were a very hard side to beat in their own conditions. Three years previously, a first-choice England had suffered a 1-0 series defeat in a six-Test tour. The now-banned Gooch was their top scorer.

Ian Botham was not banned. However England's greatest all-round cricketer had opted out of the tour of India.

The team, fresh off the plane, was soundly asleep when news began to spread that Indira Gandhi - India's Prime Minister, the daughter of the country's first post-colonial leader and the dominant figure in Indian politics for nearly twenty years - had been shot by her Sikh bodyguards.

As the players slept, Baxter awoke.

"As soon as I shut my eyes the phone was ringing," he says in Test Match Special's three-part podcast on the tour.

England team that toured in 1984-85 was short of experience ***PHOTO: X/@ NORCROSSCRICKET***

It was down to Baxter - more used to the gentle pace of a Test match - to verify whether or not one of the world's most recognisable and influential politicians was alive or dead.

Prakash Wakankar - now part of the Test Match Special commentary team - was celebrating his 21st birthday over lunch in a restaurant in Pune when he first became aware that trouble was afoot.

Violence spread across the country from the capital, with nearly 3,000 Sikhs killed by Hindu mobs over three days of violence.

By late morning, the England players were gradually making their way to breakfast in the team hotel and finding out the news.

The middle of the three matches was against an Indian under-25 XI which featured two players who would come to dominate England's thinking across the upcoming Test matches; an 18-year-old Laxman Sivaramakrishnan picked up five wickets with his leg-spin, while Mohammad Azharuddin scored 151 as the under-25s won by an innings. Both players were as yet uncapped by India but that would soon change.

> **As the players slept, I woke up. I shut my eyes the phone was ringing.**
>
> —Peter Baxter, Radio pro

England travelled to Bombay, now Mumbai, to prepare for the first Test. The day after their arrival in the city they were entertained for the evening by Percy Norris, the British Deputy High Commissioner.

Such functions were a regular and often tedious chore for touring sides but Marks remembers this one differently. "It was a small affair in his flat," he says. "Norris obviously knew his cricket. He was relishing the event. It wasn't a duty call for him and we all remembered having a really great time."

Why England didn't leave remains something of a mystery. Perhaps the proximity of the first Test, due to start the next day, had something to do with it. Marks though attributes the decision elsewhere.

India dominated the match, bowling England out cheaply and then, thanks to hundreds from Ravi Shastri and wicket keeper Syed Kirmani, gaining a lead of 270.

Despite their eventual heavy loss, there was a crucial silver lining for England. Gatting, in his 54th Test match innings, finally made his first hundred. Averaging just over 24 going into the series, he was a controversial selection who had frustrated England fans with unfulfilled promise.

Events off the pitch continued to overshadow the series as well. On the last day of the first Test, news filtered through of a disaster unfolding in Bhopal, a city in the centre of India.

The Union Carbide chemical plant, which manufactured the highly toxic gas methyl isocyanate, was leaking. The Indian government says some 3,500 people died within days of the leak and more than 15,000 in the years since. Campaigners put the death toll as high as 25,000.

Time, though, was running out. By the end of the fourth day, India had crawled to a lead of 19 with just two wickets down, and their legendary captain Gavaskar was still at the crease.

India lost their last six wickets for just 28 runs leaving England with just 125 to win in two hours.

Had India batted another 20 minutes they would surely have made the game safe. Instead, England romped to their victory target in just 23.4 overs with time and eight wickets to spare.

Quite how good the wicket was become apparent over the next two days as England amassed the eye-watering total of 652-7, thanks to Fowler and Gatting both scoring double hundreds.

Never before in Test history had two Englishmen scored double hundreds in the same innings. Their partnership of 241 took England out of sight.

The extent of the truth behind the rumour was unclear, but to England's delight the pitch was flat and hugely favoured the batters. England had the draw that secured a historic series victory.

A Test series that initially looked like it wouldn't last a week, was over after 98 fraught, frantic, and occasionally frightening and sad days on tour. *—BBC News*

50 hurt by 'strong movement' on plane from Aus to NZ

SYDNEY, 11 MARCH

At least 50 people were injured Monday by what officials described as a "strong movement" on a Chilean plane travelling from Sydney to Auckland, New Zealand. LATAM Airlines said in a statement that there was "a technical event during the flight which caused a strong movement." It did not elaborate on what happened. Passengers were met by paramedics and more than 10 emergency vehicles when the flight touched down in Auckland. About 50 people were treated at the scene for mostly mild injuries, with 13 taken to a hospital, an ambulance spokesperson said. One patient was believed to be in serious condition. Passengers said a number of people were not wearing seatbelts when flight LA800 suddenly dropped. The Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner landed at Auckland Airport as scheduled and was due to continue on to Santiago, Chile. *—AP*

2 pilots fall asleep mid-air with 150 on board, suspended

JAKARTA, 11 MARCH

Indonesia is investigating local carrier Batik Air after both pilots were found to have fallen asleep for 28 minutes mid-flight. The two men - who have both been temporarily suspended - fell asleep during a flight on 25 January from Sulawesi to the capital Jakarta. One of them was reportedly tired from helping care for his newborn twins. The Airbus A320 briefly veered off course but landed safely, with all 153 passengers and crew members unharmed. The 32-year-old pilot had told his co-pilot to take control of the aircraft about half an hour after take off, saying he needed to rest. The 28-year-old co-pilot agreed, according to a report from the transport ministry. But the co-pilot inadvertently fell asleep as well. According to the report, his wife had just given birth to one-month-old twin babies and he was helping with childcare. *—BBC News*

5 skiers found dead and 1 missing in Swiss Alps

BERN, 11 MARCH

The bodies of five missing skiers have been found in the Swiss Alps, police have said.

Local authorities are still searching for a sixth person. A huge search and rescue operation was launched on Saturday after the group went missing near the 3,706m high Tete Blanche mountain. They had set off from Zermatt, home of the famous Matterhorn mountain, on a ski tour towards Arolla along the Swiss-Italian border. Five of the six skiers were found at 21:20 local time (20:20 GMT) "without any signs of life," a statement from Swiss Valais canton police said. *—BBC News*

Ramadan begins as Gaza hunger worsens

There is no food available beyond a few canned goods

RAFAH, 11 MARCH

Parachutes drop supplies into the northern Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

Palestinians began fasting for Ramadan on Monday as the Muslim holy month arrived with ceasefire talks at a standstill, hunger worsening across the Gaza Strip and no end in sight to the five-month-old war between Israel and Hamas.

Prayers were held outside amid the rubble of demolished buildings late Sunday. Some people hung fairy lights and decorations in packed tent camps, and a video from a UN-school-turned-shelter showed children dancing and spraying foam as a man sang into a loudspeaker.

But there was little to celebrate after five months of war that has killed over 30,000 Palestinians and left much of Gaza in ruins. Families would ordinarily break the daily fast with holiday feasts, but even where food is available, there is little beyond canned goods and the prices are too high for many.

"You don't see anyone with joy in their eyes," said Sabah al-Hendi, who was shopping for food on Sunday in the southernmost city of Rafah. "Every family is sad. Every family has a martyr." The United States, Qatar and Egypt had hoped to broker a cease-fire ahead of the normally joyous month of dawn-to-dusk fasting that would include the release of dozens of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, and the entry of a large amount of humanitarian aid, but the talks stalled last week.

Hamas is demanding guarantees that any such agreement will lead to an end to the war, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the offensive until "total victory" against the militant group and the release of all the remaining hostages.

Greeting Muslims across the world on the start of Ramzan, US President Joe Biden has recognised the suffering of the Palestinian people and pledged to lead international efforts to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza and work non-stop to establish an immediate and sustained ceasefire for at least six weeks there.

Biden said that more than 30,000 Palestinians were estimated to have been killed during the operation in Gaza, which Israel launched in response to the 7 October attack by Hamas militants that left approximately 1,200 Israelis dead and about 250 taken hostage. Hamas is still believed to be holding around 100 captives and the remains of 30 others following an exchange last year.

A ship with humanitarian aid for Gaza remains docked in Cyprus, a day after it was due to begin its journey. A charity leading the mission told the BBC it was "a quickly evolving and fluid situation", but it hoped the ship, Open Arms, would set sail soon. *—AP/ BBC News*

'NEGOTIATE WITH RUSSIA'

A Vatican spokesman later said the Pope was speaking of stopping the fighting through negotiation, not capitulation **PHOTO: EPA**

Ukraine criticises Pope's 'white flag' comment

KIYV, 11 MARCH

Ukraine has strongly rejected a call by Pope Francis for Kyiv to negotiate an end to its war with Russia and have "the courage to raise the white flag".

Ukraine's foreign minister says it will "never raise any other flags" than the country's blue and yellow colours. And the country's President Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed the comments as "virtual mediation".

A Vatican spokesman later said the Pope was speaking of stopping the fighting through negotiation, not capitulation. The interview with Swiss broadcaster RSI, recorded in February, is scheduled to air on 20 March as part of a cultural programme.

According to a transcript quoted by Reuters news agency, the Pope was asked to comment on a debate between those who want Ukraine to seek a settlement with Russia - or wave the "white flag", as the interviewer put it - and those who argue that doing so would legitimise aggression. The Pope was quoted as saying: "The strongest one is the one who looks at the situation, thinks about the people and has the courage of the white flag, and negotiates." "When you see that you are defeated, that things are not going well, you have to have the courage to negotiate," he added. The statement has triggered a barrage of criticism. During his nightly video address on Sunday, President Zelensky did not directly refer to the Pope, but instead praised the work of Ukrainian chaplains on the frontline.

He said: "They are on the frontline, protecting life and humanity, supporting with prayer, conversation, and deeds. *—BBC News*

Japan marks 13 yrs since 2011 tsunami

TOKYO, 11 MARCH

Japan on Monday marked 13 years since a massive earthquake and tsunami hit the country's northern coasts. Nearly 20,000 people died, whole towns were wiped out and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant was destroyed, creating deep fears of radiation that linger today. As the nation observes the anniversary, AP explains what is happening now at the plant and in neighbouring areas.

What happened 13 years ago?

A magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck on March 11, 2011, causing a tsunami that battered northern coastal towns in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures. The tsunami, which topped 15 meters (50 fee t) in some areas, also slammed into the nuclear plant, destroying its power supply and fuel cooling systems, and causing meltdowns at reactors no one, two and three.

The operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, says that the tsunami couldn't have been anticipated. Government and independent investigations and some court decisions have said the accident was the result of human error, safety negligence, lax oversight by regulators and collusion.

Japan has since introduced stricter safety standards and at one point shifted to a nuclear energy phaseout. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government reversed that policy and has accelerated restarts of workable reactors to maintain nuclear power as a main source of Japan's power supply.

What about local fishing?

Despite earlier fears that the water discharge would further hurt Fukushima's hard-hit fishing industry, they have not damaged its reputation domestically. China's ban on Japanese seafood, which mostly hit scallop exporters in Hokkaido, apparently prompted Japanese consumers to eat more Fukushima seafood. *—AP*

At least 26 dead after flash floods hit Indonesia

PADANG, 11 MARCH

Rescuers recovered more bodies as waters began to recede after flash floods and landslides caused by torrential rains on Indonesia's Sumatra island, which have killed at least 26 people and left 11 missing, officials said Monday.

Monsoon rains and rising rivers have submerged nine districts and cities in West Sumatra province since Thursday. Late Friday, a major mudslide caused a river to breach its banks and tear through mountainside villages in Pesisir Selatan district.

Relief efforts for have been hampered by power outages, damaged bridges and roads blocked by thick mud and debris, the National Disaster Management Agency said.

Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said rescuers recovered more bodies, mostly in the worst-hit villages in Pesisir Selatan and its neighboring Padang Pariaman district, bringing the death toll rose to 26. Landslides buried at least 14 houses, he said. *—AP*

Kate sorry for editing Mother's Day photos

LONDON, 11 MARCH

Kate Middleton **PHOTO: X**

- In a post on social media, Kate said that "like many amateur photographers, I do occasionally experiment with editing"

Kate, the Princess of Wales, apologised on Monday for "confusion" caused by her editing of a family photo released by the palace a photo of her with her children that was intended to calm concern and speculation about the princess's health, but had the opposite effect.

Five major news agencies, including The Associated Press, withdrew the image over concerns about digital manipulation. That sent the online rumour mill, already filled with speculation over over Kate's recent surgery and recuperation, into overdrive.

In a post on social media, Kate said that "like many amateur photographers, I do occasionally experiment with editing." "I wanted to express my apologies for any confusion the family photograph we shared yesterday caused," the post said.

The palace said the photo was taken by Prince William. Issued by Kensington Palace on Sunday to mark Mother's Day in Britain, it was the first official photo of Kate since her abdominal surgery nearly two months ago.

"Thank you for your kind wishes and continued support over the last two months," Kate said on social media. "Wishing everyone a Happy Mother's Day." AP initially published the photo. While there was no suggestion the photo was fake, AP retracted it because closer inspection revealed the source had manipulated the image in a way that did not meet AP's photo standards. *—AP*

HISTORIC DECISION

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari with daughter Asifa Bhutto arrive for a ceremony in Pakistan on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Aseefa Bhutto to be Pakistan's first lady

ISLAMABAD, 11 MARCH

In a historic decision, Pakistan President Asif Zardari has decided to formally recognise his 31-year-old daughter Aseefa Bhutto as the First Lady of the country, according to a media report.

The status of the First Lady goes to the wife of the President of the country in general. But Zardari became a widower after his wife and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in 2007. Zardari did not remarry and the position of the first lady also remained vacant during his first tenure as the country's president — from 2008 to 2013. Zardari, 68, was sworn in as the country's 14th president on Sunday. During his oath-taking ceremony at the President's House in Islamabad, Zardari was accompanied by his youngest daughter, Aseefa. President Zardari decided to declare Aseefa Bhutto as the first lady of Pakistan, ARY News reported. This became particularly relevant when Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari, the eldest daughter, tagged Aseefa in a tweet on Sunday *—PTI*

Oscars 2024: Night of truimph, celebration & glam

'Oppenheimer' reigns at Oscars with 7 wins

- **BEST FILM**
- **BEST DIRECTOR** — Christopher Nolan
- **BEST FILM EDITING**
- **BEST ORIGINAL SCORE**
- **BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY**

BEST ACTOR IN A LEADING ROLE

Cillian Murphy

> We made a film about the man who created the atomic bomb, and for better or for worse, we're all living in Oppenheimer's world, so I'd really like to dedicate this to the peacemakers everywhere
>
> -Cillian Murphy

BEST ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

Robert Downey Jr

This is his 1st Oscar after 54 years in the industry

Best actress in a leading role

Emma Stone: Poor Things

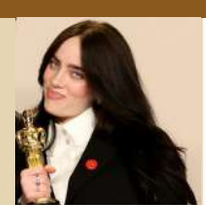
Best actress in a supporting role

Da'Vine Joy Randolph: The Holdovers

Best Song

What Was I Made For? **(Barbie)**

Billie Eilish, become the youngest ever to win 2 Oscars



Best international feature film

The Zone of Interest

Best adapted screenplay

American Fiction

Best original screenplay

Anatomy of a Fall

Ryan Gosling performing I'm Just Ken with Slash

Best costume design

Poor Things

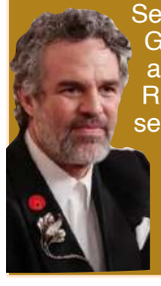
Best visual effects

Godzilla Minus One

Best animated short film

War is over! Inspired by the Music of John & Yoko

War shadows Oscars



Several stars including Grammy winner Billie Eilish and Oscar nominee Mark Ruffalo wore red pins representing Artists4Ceasefire, five months into the Israel-Hamas war. More than 30,000 people have been killed since the war in Gaza began in October

Godfather of animation

BEST ANIMATED FILM: THE BOY AND THE HERON
DIRECTOR: HAYAO MIYAZAKI

The co-founder of Japanese animation house Studio Ghibli won his first Oscar in 2003 for Spirited Away. Known as the godfather of animation, he took a decade to make 'The Boy and the Heron'. All his animations are hand-drawn. This is his last film

Cena in his birthday suit

John Cena makes a butt naked appearance to announce the award for costume designing

Best Live action short film

The Wonderful Story o f Henry Sugar wins. This is director Wes Anderson's first Oscar win in his career of 3 decades

India's Nitin Desai honoured

Bollywood art director who created sets for blockbuster movies such as the Oscar-nominated Lagaan and Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam, was among the film personalities who were honoured in the 'In Memoriam' segment

Rupee falls 8 paise to settle at 82.75 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 11 MARCH

The rupee declined by 8 paise to settle at 82.75 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, tracking bearish equity markets.Forex analysts said weakness in the US dollar and a decline in crude oil prices cushioned the downside.At the inter-bank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.74 and touched the intra-day low of 82.76 against the greenback. The local unit finally settled at 82.75 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 8 paise from its previous close.On Thursday, the rupee climbed 16 paise to settle at 82.67 against the US dollar.The forex market was closed on Friday for Mahashivratri. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 104.21, unchanged from its previous close."We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on risk aversion in global markets and concerns that FIIs may sell leading to outflows. Any recovery in the US dollar and any pullback in crude oil prices may also weigh on the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.—*PTI*

Gold stays flat at ₹66,400 per 10 grams

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Gold prices stayed flat at Rs 66,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday, according to HDFC Securities.The precious metal maintained its ground in the latest trade after it hit an all-time high mark in the previous close."Gold prices traded flat on Monday after notching a fresh all-time high in the previous session," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. However, silver prices plunged Rs 100 to Rs 75,500 per kg, while it had ended at Rs 75,600 per kg in the previous trade.In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,180 per ounce, while silver was trading at USD 24.29 per ounce.—*PTI*

Many nations want to start rupee trade with India: Goyal

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Many developed and developing countries including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and nations of the Gulf region are keen to start trade in rupee with India as it would help cut transaction costs for businesses, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said. He expressed confidence that the development is going to be a "very game-changing" dimension to India's international trade. "Bangladesh, Sri Lanka are already talking to us and they want us to start this immediately. Other countries in the Gulf region are looking at that. I think it'll take some time for people to see the benefits. And then we'll have more and more developed countries and countries in the Far East also joining the bandwagon. Singapore is already on board to some extent," he said.He added that gradually countries are realising that undertaking trade in domestic currencies has several advantages.—*PTI*

Green Infra bags 440 MW wind-solar works

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Sembcorp Industries on Monday said its arm Green Infra Wind Energy Ltd (GIWEL) has bagged a 440 MW wind-solar hybrid power project from SJVN Ltd.The build-own-operate project is part of a 1.5GW bid issued by SJVN in September 2023, a company statement said. According to the statement of Sembcorp Industries (Sembcorp), through its wholly-owned renewables subsidiary, Green Infra Wind Energy Ltd (GIWEL), has received the Letter of Award (LOA) for a 440MW (Megawatt) Inter-state Transmission System (ISTS) connected wind-solar hybrid power project (the Project) from SJVN Ltd (SJVN).The power output from the project will be sold to SJVN under a 25-year long-term Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), it said.
—*PTI*

Sensex falls 617 pts, Nifty below 22,350

Nifty slumps by 160.90 pts or 0.72% to close at 22,332.65

MUMBAI, 11 MARCH

Stock market benchmark Sensex declined by 616.75 points on Monday, snapping its two-day gaining streak due to selling in metal and banking shares amid weak trends in the global markets.

Taking a breather after a record-breaking rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 616.75 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 73,502.64 due to profit taking. During the day, the barometer tanked 685.48 points to 73,433.91.

The broader Nifty slumped by 160.90 points or 0.72 per cent to close at 22,332.65.

"In the short term, Nifty could experience weakness, possibly leading to a decline toward the range of 22,200-22,250. Looking at the upside, immediate resistance is identified at 22,400 based on closing prices," Rupak De, Senior Technical Analyst at LKP Securities, said.

Among Sensex firms, Power Grid and Tata Steel fell more than 2 per cent. HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank, Hindustan Unilever and NTPC were among the major laggards.

Nestle, Bajaj Finserv and Bajaj Finance were among the gainers.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 2.01 per cent and midcap index dipped 0.24 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, telecommunication plunged by 2.40 per cent, metal by 1.39 per cent, utilities by 1.25 per cent, realty by 1.16 per cent, and energy by 1.15 per cent. Healthcare was the only gainer.

Shares of State Bank of India settled 2 per cent lower on Monday after the Supreme Court trashed the public sector lender's plea seeking an extension of time to disclose the details of electoral bonds to the Election Commission and ordered it to give the data related to poll bonds by close of business hours on March 12.

The apex court also put the SBI on notice and said it may be inclined to proceed against the lender for "wilful disobedience" of its February 15 verdict, if the bank failed to comply with its directions and timelines.

Among Asian markets, Japan's Nikkei 225 index shed 2.2 per cent and South Korea's Kospi fell 0.8 per cent.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 1.4 per cent and Shanghai Composite jumped 0.7 per cent.

Markets were closed on Friday for Mahashivratri.
—*PTI*

Nestle and Bajaj Finance were among the gainers **PHOTO: PTI**

'ENGINEERING MARVEL'

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Monday inaugurated the first phase of the coastal road between Worli and Marine Drive in south Mumbai and said it is an "engineering marvel". A 10.5 kilometre stretch will be opened for traffic in the first phase **PHOTO: PTI**

The Body Shop files for bankruptcy, shuts US-based stores

NEW YORK, 11 MARCH

UK-based cosmetics company, The Body Shop, shut down all of its US-based operations and will soon be closing dozens of Canadian store locations after filing for bankruptcy, CNN reported.

Earlier this month, The Body Shop, in an official release, announced that its US subsidiary was no longer operational, effective 1 March.

It further added that 33 of its 105 stores in Canada will begin liquidation sales immediately and "online sales via Canada's e-commerce store will stop," but that all Canadian locations will remain open for the time being.

According to reports, high inflation in recent years has affected traditional retailers, particularly those like The Body Shop, which predominantly operated out of malls and were aimed at the middle class.

The UK-based cosmetics company, founded in 1976 by human rights activist and environmental campaigner Anita Roddick, is known for products it markets as natural, sustainable, ethical and cruelty-free.

It was one of the first companies to prohibit testing on animals for many of its products.

Later in 2019, it was certified as a "B Corp," a designation given to companies that meet certain transparency and environmental conscientiousness standards.

By 2023, it had expanded to more than 2,500 retail locations in over 80 countries and was available to purchase online in more than 60 markets.

Since its inception, The Body Shop has changed hands several times. It was purchased by cosmetics giant L'Oreal in 2006 for more than a billion dollars and later sold to Brazilian company Natura in 2017 for another billion dollars.

However, the brand fell into hard times and has been ailing in recent years.

Its direct-to-consumer channels, which had "benefitted during COVID-19," returned to "more normalized pre-pandemic levels," further impacting sales numbers, Natura said.

Moreover, late last year, The Body Shop was sold to asset management group Aurelius for about USD 266 million, as reported by CNN.
—*ANI*

The Body Shop has announced that its US subsidiary was no longer operational **PHOTO: LINKEDIN**

'No signs of redemptions in small-cap, mid-cap funds'

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Amid market regulator SEBI's concern over heightened inflow in small-cap and mid-cap funds, industry experts said they do not see any alarming signs of redemptions in this space.

Despite the concerns, investors are anticipated to continue pursuing these funds due to their potential for high returns, they added.

SEBI, late last month, asked mutual fund houses to put in place a framework to safeguard the interest of investors, who invested in small and mid-cap funds amid the froth building up in the segments.

This came in the backdrop of huge flow in the small and mid-cap schemes of mutual funds over the past few quarters.

- SEBI, late last month, asked mutual fund houses to put in place a framework to safeguard the interest of investors, who invested in small and mid-cap funds amid the froth building up in the segments

Overall in 2023, mid-cap mutual fund schemes attracted nearly Rs 23,000 crore, while the same for small-cap schemes was at over Rs 41,000 crore. In 2022, mid-cap funds saw an inflow of Rs 20,550 crore and Rs 19,795 crore in small-cap funds.

On the other hand, large-cap mutual funds experienced an outflow of nearly Rs 3,000 crore in 2023 and an inflow of Rs 7,281 crore in 2022.

Inflows have historically chased returns -- small and mid-cap funds -- in today's context. This phenomenon is expected to persist despite the warnings.Considering 2024 is an election year and markets are betting on large-cap, Niket Shah, Fund Manager at Motilal Oswal AMC, said there will be a consolidation in small and mid-cap segments in the short-term but investors will continue to pursue these funds for their potential for high returns and will not hesitate until there is a significant decline in stock prices.
—*PTI*

SEBI: PRICE MANIPULATION IN SME SEGMENT

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch on Monday said the capital markets regulator is seeing "signs" of price manipulation in the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) segment.

SEBI is still working with advisors to understand all the dimensions and analyse the data, she said, adding that if it finds some malpractices the next step may be to issue a public consultation on it.

She said the investors need to understand that the SME segment is different from the main board and it is necessary for SEBI to underline the same in terms of the rules on disclosures which are made to investors.
—*PTI*

Indian airlines expected to report lower net loss this FY

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Airlines are projected to report a lower net loss of Rs 3,000 to 4,000 crore in the current as well as next financial years, helped by healthy passenger traffic growth and pricing discipline, a report said on Monday.

For February, credit rating agency ICRA in its report said domestic air passenger traffic was estimated at around 127.5 lakh.

The aviation sector has also been grappling with supply chain challenges and issues related to Pratt & Whitney (P&W) engines.

IndiGo grounded more than 70 planes due to P&W engine problems.

Meanwhile, it said the pace of recovery in industry earnings is likely to be gradual owing to the high fixed-cost nature of the business.

According to the report, the net loss is further expected to reduce significantly to "Rs 30-40 billion in FY2024 and FY2025", as airlines continue to witness healthy passenger traffic growth and maintain pricing discipline.

Giving a stable outlook for the country's aviation industry, ICRA said there is continued recovery in domestic and international air passenger traffic, and relatively stable cost environment and expectations of the trend continuing in FY2025.
—*PTI*

Aviation sector has also been grappling with supply chain issues related to Pratt & Whitney engines **PHOTO: PTI**

REVISED ECONOMIC GROWTH

Japan avoids technical recession

TOKYO, 11 MARCH

Japan has avoided falling into a technical recession after its official economic growth figures were revised.

The revised data shows gross domestic product (GDP) was 0.4 per cent higher in the last three months of 2023 compared to a year earlier.

Provisional figures released last month indicated the second consecutive quarter of economic contraction.

Two quarters in a row of an economy shrinking is typically considered the definition of a technical recession.

But the revised figures still came below expectations, as some economists had forecast an upward revision to fourth quarter GDP of around per cent.

Hopes that the country had skirted a recession were boosted last week when figures from the Ministry of Finance showed a sharp rise in the amount companies invested in their businesses.However, the figures from Japan's Cabinet Office on Monday showed private consumption, which makes up about 60 per cent of the economy, fell by 0.3 per cent for the period.

Japan's uneven economic performance may see another contraction in the current quarter due to the impact of issues including a slowdown of neighbouring China's economy and a suspension of production at car maker Daihatsu.

The upward revision to the fourth quarter GDP came as expectations are growing that the country's central bank could soon raise interest rates.

The Bank of Japan has held rates at -0.1 per cent since it cut borrowing costs below zero in 2016 as it tried to boost spending and investment.Negative rates make the yen less attractive to global investors, which has pushed down the currency's value.

Japan's main stock market index, the Nikkei 225, was around 2.5 per cent lower on Monday morning.
—*BBC News*

Provisional figures released last month indicate the second consecutive quarter of economic contraction **PHOTO: PTI**

DELIVERY GUYS SUFFER TOO

47% cab drivers face violence at work

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Nearly 47 per cent cab drivers and 41.5 per cent delivery people face some form of violence at work with a majority of the latter demanding to discontinue the 10 minutes delivery policy, a survey report has revealed.

Companies offer discount and provide the order for free if the delivery is not made within 10 minutes of placing the order. Several companies offer discount and provide the order for free if the delivery is not made within 10 minutes of placing the order.

In an incident in October last year, a pizza delivery man in Pune, Maharashtra, was assaulted and threatened by firing in the air by an angry customer due to late arrival of the pizza at his doorstep. According to the survey by a Delhi-based NGO, PAIGAM, 41.5 per cent of the respondents reported that they have faced violence at work.The survey studied responses from a sample size of 10,000 gig and app-based drivers, and delivery workers between April 2022 to 2023 across eight states, including Delhi, Lucknow, Jaipur, Indore, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Bengaluru. It highlights the challenges faced by app-based drivers and gig workers, who are grappling with lack of employment benefits, job insecurity, legal protection concerns, income instability, violence and discrimination.

72 per cent of the gig workers find it difficult to manage their expenses with an earning below Rs 15,000 per month. "83 per cent of cab drivers work over 10 hours a day, with a 31 per cent exceeding 14 hours daily. Still, 72 per cent of workers find it difficult to manage expenses and a substantial percentage earns below Rs 15,000 per month," survey said.
—*PTI*

83% of cab drivers work over 10 hours a day, with a 31% exceeding 14 hours daily **PHOTO: PTI**

11 March also marks the day the word 'flat white' was added to the Oxford English Dictionary **PHOTO: GOOGLE**

GOOGLE SHINES SPOTLIGHT ON 'FLAT WHITE' COFFEE WITH ANIMATED DOODLE

CALIFORNIA, 11 MARCH

Coffee lovers are having their moment on Google with the search engine featuring an animated doodle on 'Flat white' a steamy espresso beverage, which is believed to have originated in Australia and New Zealand.

11 March also marks the day the word, 'flat white' was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2011.

According to the definition, a flat white is made up of an espresso shot topped with steamed milk and a thin layer of microfoam and is traditionally served in a ceramic cup.

Flat whites are popular with coffee connoisseurs who are looking for less foam.
—*ANI*

SWISS BEAUTY TO DOUBLE BRAND OUTLETS

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Colour cosmetics brand Swiss Beauty on Monday said it plans to expand its retail footprint and double its exclusive brand outlets across 12 Indian cities by the end of 2024-25.

The brand, which has a network of 25,500 retail touch points across over 550 cities, aims to increase it to 30,000 by expanding into tier 2 and smart cities, Swiss Beauty said in a statement.

It plans to open an additional 147 beauty-assisted outlets across India and add over 450 touch points in general trade in 2024-25, the statement said.It is present in cities, including Chandigarh, Udaipur, Lucknow, Pune, Kolkata, Surat, Bengaluru, Bhopal, and Amritsar.
—*PTI*

KNOW THE TEAMS

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

With Pat Cummins, a first time captaincy stint in the lucrative T20 league, SRH is all set to make records this season. They won their first IPL in 2016

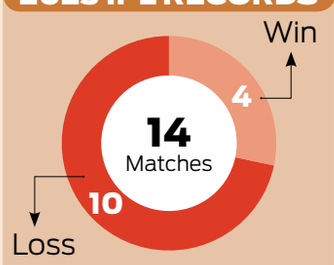
Rahul Tripathi
Key Batsman

22.75	74	13
Avg (Average)	HS (Highest Score)	Innings (Innings)
128.17	29	10
SR (Strike Rate)	4s (Fours)	6s (sixes)

STRENGTHS

A fierce pace trio with bowlers like Pat Cummins, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Umran Malik Aggressive batting styles from Markram Klaasen in the middle order

2023 IPL RECORDS



WEAKNESS

Out of form domestic players Lag behind with spin-bowling options. Lack of composure in deathover bowling

Bhuvneshwar Kumar
Key Bowler

14	16	8.33
Innings (Innings)	Wkts (Wickets)	Eco (Economy)
30/5	0	
BBI (Best Bowling in innings)	4W (Wickets)	

SQUAD Pat Cummins (C), Abdul Samad, Mayank Agarwal, Anmolpreet Singh, Travis Head, Heinrich Klaasen, Aiden Markram, Rahul Tripathi, Upendra Yadav, Abhishek Sharma, Wanindu Hasaranga, Marc Jansen, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Glenn Philips, Sanvir Singh, Shabaz Ahmed, Washington Sundar, Akash Singh, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Bhuvaneshwar Kumar, Mayank Markande, T Natarajan, Jhathavedh Subramanyam, Umran Malik, Jaydev Unadkat

SCHEDULE

23 March vs KKR	27 March vs MI	31 March vs GT	5 April vs CSK
Kolkata	Hyderabad	Ahmedabad	Hyderabad

Fast-paced Madrid regain 7-point lead over Girona

Spanish league: Vinícius Júnior scored his third goal in four games

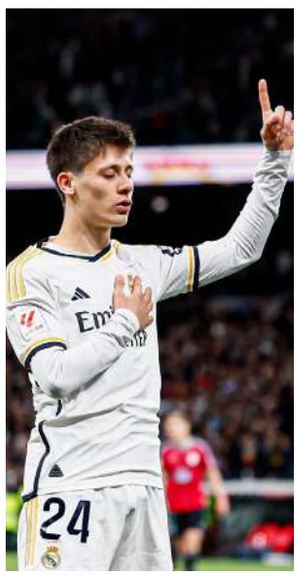
MADRID, 11 MARCH

Real Madrid made peace with its fans with a comfortable win over Celta Vigo and reclaimed a seven-point lead at the top of the Spanish league on Sunday.

Vinícius Júnior scored his third goal in four games as Madrid eased to a 4-0 victory that followed consecutive draws that included a lackluster performance against Leipzig in the Champions League, which prompted jeers from the home crowd at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

"We improved in attitude and intensity. It wasn't too hard to do better than we did on Wednesday," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "We're happy, focused and motivated because it's an important stage of the season. At Real Madrid, a draw is the first step toward a crisis."

Madrid had drawn four of its last seven matches in all competitions. It advanced to the quarterfinals of the Champions League on Wednesday despite a poor performance in a 1-1 draw against Leipzig. Defender Antonio Rüdiger set up two goals on Sunday, and Turkey international Arda Güler made his scoring debut with Madrid. The hosts got two own-goals.



The victory maintained Madrid's cushion at the top after second-place Girona beat Osasuna 2-0 on Saturday and third-place Barcelona defeated Mallorca 1-0 on Friday *PHOTO: X/ REAL MADRID*

The victory maintained Madrid's cushion at the top after second-place Girona beat Osasuna 2-0 on Saturday and third-place Barcelona defeated Mallorca 1-0 on Friday. Barcelona, the defending champion, is eight points behind Madrid with 10 rounds left.

Madrid is unbeaten at the Bernabeu in 18 matches this season, with 15 wins and three draws. Its last home loss was in April 2023 against Villarreal. It is unbeaten in the league in 22 straight matches, since a 3-1 loss at Atletico Madrid.

Celta had only one attempt on target in what was its eighth straight loss to Madrid. Rafa Benítez's team sits just outside the relegation zone, two points from danger. "We were playing against the best team in the league and we were in it until the 79th minute," Benítez said. "Things could have gone differently."

Vinícius opened the scoring from close range after a firm header by Rüdiger in the 21st. Madrid added to the lead with own-goals by goalkeeper Vicente Guaita in the 79th and defender Carlos Domínguez in the 88th. Guaita's own-goal came after a firm header by Rüdiger bounced off the crossbar and the goalkeeper's back.

Güler, 19, who replaced Vinícius in the 89th, scored his first goal for Madrid four minutes into stoppage time. *—AP*

Shami's comeback likely by home series against B'desh

DHARAMSALA, 11 MARCH

India's premier pacer Mohammed Shami, who is recuperating from an ankle surgery, is expected to make his comeback with the home Test series against Bangladesh later this year, BCCI secretary Jay Shah told PTI. Shami missed the five-match Test series against England and will also sit out of the IPL after having undergone surgery for Achilles tendon last month. He will also miss the T20 World Cup to be jointly hosted by the West Indies and the USA in June. Shami last played for India in the ODI World Cup where he was their standout performer. India will host Bangladesh for two Tests and three T20 Internationals in September. Rahul missed the last four Tests of the England series after complaining of pain in his right quadriceps. *—PTI*

WTC Points Table: Australia climb to second spot

DUBAI, 11 MARCH

Australia have overtaken New Zealand to take the second spot in the World Test Championships ranking following the 2-0 series win over their Trans-Tasman rivals in Christchurch on Monday. The win in the second Test helped Australia collect 12 points on their road to defending the World Test Championship mace. Australia have improved their percentage points from 59.09 to 62.50 after 12 matches. New Zealand have dropped from 60 percentage points to 50 to be third on the list. They have played six games. India, who have won six of their nine matches, continue to lead the table 68.51. *—PTI*

Belgium's change kit at Euro 2024 has been leaked

BRUSSELS, 11 MARCH

Some of the Belgium soccer players taking part in the European Championship this summer could well resemble a world-famous reporter. According to leaks on various specialised websites, the team's Euro 2024 change kit is a tribute to Tintin, the intrepid Belgian reporter and comic-book legend. Belgian federation is set to unveil the new kit on Thursday during a press conference at Hergé Museum, which celebrates the career of Tintin's creator. Coach Domenico Tedesco will also announce his squad that day for upcoming friendly games against Ireland and England. In his action-packed adventures, Tintin often wears a blue sweater over a white collared shirt paired with brown cutoff pants, white socks and brown shoes. Nicknamed the Red Devils, Belgium's traditional first kit is a red one. *—AP*

Team India excels at Nepal Int'l Pickleball

KATHMANDU 11 MARCH

In a riveting display of skill and sportsmanship, the All India Pickleball Association (AIPA) made a mark at the prestigious Nepal International Pickleball Tournament. The event, set against the stunning backdrop of Nepal, witnessed fierce competition, and Team India emerged with a commendable total of six medals - two gold, two silver, and two bronze each. Pickleball -which has become a worldwide sensation in a very short time-- is a fusion of tennis, table tennis and badminton. *—ANI*

HI announces 28-member group for national camp

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Hockey India (HI) on Monday announced a 28-member core probable group for the senior men's National Coaching Camp, scheduled to be held from 12 to 30 March at Kalinga Hockey Stadium in Bhubaneswar.

The camp is significant as Indian Team will aim to fine-tune their preparations ahead of the crucial Paris 2024 Olympics.

The team returns to camp after a successful outing in FIH Hockey Pro League 2023/24, where they are placed third after claiming 15 points from 8 matches across Bhubaneswar and Rourkela legs.

The league will resume on 22 May, 2024 in Antwerp, Belgium, before moving to London on 1 June and then the Netherlands for the final leg of the FIH Hockey Pro League 2023/24.

The core group of the National Coaching Camp includes goalkeepers Krishan Bahadur Pathak, PR Sreejesh, Suraj Karkera and defenders Harmanpreet Singh, Jarmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay, Sumit, and Amir Ali.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

The midfielders called up to the camp include Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Rabichandra Singh Moirangthem, Shamsher Singh, Nilakanta Sharma, Rajkumar Pal, Vishnukant Singh.

Akashdeep Singh, Mandeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Abhishek, Dilpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Gurjant Singh, Mohammed Raheel Mouseen, Boby Singh Dhami, and Araijeet Singh Hundal are in the list of forwards.

Indian men's hockey team chief coach Craig Fulton said they are looking to begin an important block of training in this camp. *—ANI*

Mooney, Shabnam help Gujarat Giants to win over UP Warriorz

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Gujarat Giants scored an eight-run win against UP Warriorz in their Women's Premier League match here with Beth Mooney scoring a fine unbeaten half-century and teenager Shabnam Shakil complementing her skipper with her incisive bowling here on Monday.

Australian Mooney smashed an unbeaten 74 off 52 balls and then Shabnam (3/11) put the Warriorz on the mat with the wickets of Alyssa Healy (4) and Chamari Athapaththu (0) in the first over itself. At one stage UP Warriorz were in dire straits, losing four wickets for just 16 on the board before a valiant unbeaten 88 off 60 balls by Deepti Sharma saw them challenge the rivals. But she ran out of overs.

UP Warriorz batters Deepti Sharma and Poonam Khemnar during the WPL match in New Delhi on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Brief scores: Gujarat Giants 152 for 8 (Laura Wolvaardt 43, Beth Mooney 74; Sophie Ecclestone 3/38, Deepti Sharma 2/22) beat UP Warriorz 144 for 5 (Deepti Sharma 88 not out, Poonam Khemnar 36; Shabnam Shakil 3/11) by 8 runs. *—PTI*

MIRABAI CHANU TO TRAIN IN PARIS AHEAD OF OLYMPICS

NEW DELHI, 11 MARCH

Former world champion weightlifter Mirabai Chanu's proposal to train in Paris ahead of Olympic Games was on Monday cleared by the government.

Tokyo Olympics silver medallist will acclimatise to the weather and prepare for the quadrennial showpiece during her month-long stint in La Ferte-Milon in Paris, according to a statement by the Sports Ministry's Mission Olympic Cell.

The 29-year-old Chanu, who competes in the 49kg category, will be accompanied by two coaches and a physiotherapist. The government will bear the cost of air tickets, visa fees, accommodation, food, training, local transport and medical insurance among other expenditures under the Target Olympic Podium Scheme. The Mission Olympic Cell also cleared the proposals of equestrian exponent Anush Agarwalla to compete in eight competitions and buy equipment for his horses. "Judoka Asmita Dey and shooter Arjun Singh Cheema's request for financial assistance was also cleared. The request for financial assistance by ace Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal for participation in two international competitions along with expenditure for his support staff was also approved by MOC. *—PTI*

DRAMA AT WRESTLING TRIALS

Vinesh wins 50kg bout after holding up proceedings

PATIALA, 11 MARCH

On a day of high drama, celebrated Indian woman wrestler Vinesh Phogat won the 50kg bout after delaying the proceeding for almost three hours before leaving the venue without providing her urine sample to the waiting National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) officials, on Monday.

As per NADA rules, "evading sample collection; or refusing or failing to submit to sample collection without compelling justification after notification by a duly authorised person" could constitute an anti-doping rule violation (ADRV). In the morning, Vinesh, who is keen to remain in the reckoning for the Paris Olympics, did not let the selection trials start in the women's 50kg and 53kg categories and demanded a written assurance from the authorities that a final trial would be held in the latter weight class before the Olympics.

Following assurances by the ad-hoc committee, the trials commenced and Vinesh defeated Shivani 11-6 in the 50kg category to book a place in the Paris Olympics Qualification tournament to be held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan next month. She, however, lost the 53kg bout to Anju by technical superiority 0-10.

The 29-year-old used to compete in 53kg before the protest but has lowered her weight class since Antim Panghal has already earned an Olympic quota in that category.

"Vinesh wants an assurance from the government. Probably she fears that if WFI gets back control, the federation may change the selection policy. But how can the government give assurance on this? The government can't interfere in selection matters," a coach, present at the trials said. *—PTI*

Indian women wrestler Vinesh Phogat, 29, used to compete in 53kg before the protest *PHOTO: PTI*

RANJI TROPHY FINAL

Mumbai player Dhawal Kulkarni with teammates celebrates the wicket of Vidharbha batter Atharva Taide in Mumbai *PHOTO: PTI*

'Job is far from done for Mumbai against Vidarbha'

MUMBAI, 11 MARCH

Senior left-arm spinner Shams Mulani feels that Mumbai team cannot afford to be complacent despite having an overall lead of 260 runs after two days in the Rnji Trophy final against Vidarbha.

Mumbai produced an all-round show on the second day at the Wankhede Stadium to take complete command, bowling out Vidarbha for a mere 105 in the first innings to earn a big 119-run lead.

In their second innings, Mumbai were jolted twice early on but skipper Ajinkya Rahane (58 not out) and Musheer Khan (51 not out) led a resolute fightback with an unbeaten 107-run stand for the third wicket to take second innings score to 141/2. "Three days are left (in the game). We have not thought about anything else other than batting. Yes, we have got a healthy lead but we will look to build on it and see how we can improve and take the game away from them as much as possible," Mulani told the media after stumps.

Mulani said Rahane's timely unbeaten fifty was worth celebrating like a century for the Mumbai dressing room. "We celebrated like it was a hundred because we knew how important this small milestone for him is. For the team, for himself, in this situation, it was very important that he stays on the wicket," Mulani said.

The domination for Mumbai was, however, set up by veteran Dhawal Kulkarni, who snaffled two key wickets on first day evening and bowled a measly spell of 11-5-15-3 while adding one more dismissal to his kitty. Mulani said to see former India medium pacer Kulkarni excelling in his final game of his career was "emotional"."It was emotional moment for all of us. For him, obviously it was very emotional. But coming the way he did —he didn't play the last four games but it didn't feel like he has not played," Mulani said. "Him coming in at a crucial stage like the finals and delivering... Coming in is a different thing and delivering in the finals is a different thing. We are very happy for him as a unit," Mulani said. *—PTI*

FRENCH OPEN

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will be expected to continue their rich vein of form *PHOTO: PTI*

Indians chase glory at All England event

BIRMINGHAM, 11 MARCH

Newly-crowned French Open champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will be expected to continue their rich vein of form, while the seasoned PV Sindhu will hope to ace a trial by fire to end India's 23-year-old title drought at the All England Championships starting here on Tuesday.

Prakash Padukone (1980) and Pullela Gopichand (2001) are the only ones from India to have claimed the title with Saina Nehwal (2015) and Lakshya Sen (2022) coming close when they finished runner-ups.

The prestigious tournament holds an iconic status in India but over the years, its exclusivity has somewhat dwindled as it is now one of the four Super 1000 event on the international calendar.

Satwik and Chirag have already won a Super 1000 title in Indonesia last year and given their stellar run this season, expectations would be high when the two towering shuttlers take the court this week, following their exploits at Paris on Sunday night. Satwik and Chirag, the Asian Games champions, have bossed their opponents this season, reaching three finals -- Malaysia Super 1000, and India Super 750 before winning at Paris -- and will remain India's biggest hopes of a title finish at the Utilita Arena Birmingham here.

Standing in front of them in the opening round will be the veteran Indonesian pair of Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan, the three-time world champions.

They have caused a lot of heartbreaks for the Indians in the past. The 'Daddies' had defeated Satwik and Chirag the last time they faced in the French Open last year and the Indians will be eyeing revenge. *—PTI*